Saddled with Content

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Abstract

The central issue in this thesis is whether the world, as we find it in perceptual experience, shares structure with thought. According to the view that I label "monism", it does; according to "dualism", it does not. It is my aim to defend monism: in a basic case, we think of something that it is some way; we can also see that something is some way, so that it is then manifest before our eyes that something is some way. Thought, experience, and the world share predicative structure. In chapter I, I argue for monism by arguing against dualism, which in chapter III is discussed more specifically as the view of Charles Travis.

But an at least equally important aim is to overcome a certain philosophical framework within which monism cannot come into its own. The core assumption of this framework is that a thinkable content is, in itself, without assertoric force, and to hold it to be true one must add such force. In chapter II, I argue that a thinkable content rather has the character of a claim, even if this character can be muted in certain special contexts, or when the content occurs in a more complex whole. Only against this background can monism be understood as the truism that it is. When it comes to this framework issue, "Fregean monism" functions as a foil, which in chapter IV is discussed more specifically as the view of John McDowell in *Mind and World*.

Contents

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One group drags everything down to earth from the heavenly region of the invisible, actually clutching rocks and trees with their hands. … The people on the other side of the debate … insist violently that true being is certain non-bodily forms that can be thought. … There's a never-ending battle going on constantly between them about this issue…

Plato, *The Sophist*

I Everything is not enough

§1 Introduction

In this chapter I introduce two opposing philosophical views of perceptual experience and judgement. Schematically, the opposition can be framed as follows. According to the one view, *dualism*, we cannot say what we see: we can speak *about* what is given, but we cannot say *it*. The world is everything that we can think about, the totality of things. According to the other, *monism*, we can say what we see: we can see that something is the case, and we can also say that something is the case. The world is everything that is the case, the totality of facts. I argue for monism. But an at least equally important aim is to bring into view a philosophical framework, inspired by Descartes and Frege, within which monism seems impossible. What becomes of monism within this framework I call *Fregean monism*; it is defended by John McDowell in *Mind and World*.

In §2 I introduce dualism, in §3 I argue that it is committed to a contentious thesis, and in §4 I argue that this thesis is mistaken. In §5 I introduce Fregean monism and argue that it is likewise mistaken. In §6 I discuss the rejection of Fregean monism and suggest that monism can then be a viable alternative. Finally, I answer some objections concerning perceptual experience.

§2 Dualism

1 It is one of the most basic philosophical convictions that anything that can be put into words must be at a remove from the sensible world. What we mean by our words, the thought expressed, is abstract and general, grasped by the mind instead of the senses. The sensible world is not made up of abstract generalities, but of what is particular and extended in space and time: such things as animals and plants, grains of sand, footprints, shadows and clouds; or maybe such things as the falling of a shadow, the rising of a wave, an evening walk. In experience something particular impresses itself on our senses and thus becomes present to us; in response we make up our mind about what to think and do. We then draw a relation between a thought and what is given; for the thought to be true is for the relation to hold. So we cannot literally *see* that the wave is rising, or that the evening is setting, or that one coin is larger than another; to see that something is the case is really to tell that a thought is true on the basis of being given what is out there. I call any view of this shape *dualism*.[1]

Let me elaborate on this by means of two theses. The first thesis is that

1 The label is meant to evoke Davidson's "dualism of scheme and content" (Davidson 1973) rather than, say, mind/body dualism. But I believe Davidson had in mind something somewhat more specific. His target is a version of what I call dualism, but motivated by the sense that there are radically different perspectives from which to describe how things are, none of which has a claim to being the true perspective. I will mainly be concerned with dualism as motivated by the idea that perception is a confrontation with our surroundings (chapter I), and by a Cartesian conception of judgement (chapter II).

perceptual awareness is an achievement of our senses, without help from either the understanding or the capacity for judgement. To see things is not already to apply concepts or to take any stances on how things are. Perception is passive in a way that contrasts - not only with action, but also - with the kind of rational agency exhibited in belief and knowledge. It is not just that we cannot decide what to see or how we see it to be. It is, of course, true that we cannot decide what to see, aside from choosing where to stand and how to focus our attention. But we cannot decide what to believe either, aside from deciding what to investigate and where to look for information. Nonetheless, believing is something we do, in a certain sense: it is an expression of rational agency, an exercise of judgement and understanding. The dualist thinks perception is not even active in that sense.

One way in which the passivity of experience comes to expression is grammatical. Although we normally speak of perception in the active voice, with the perceiving subject in the grammatical subject position ("I see…."), the dualist talks of it in the passive voice: as being appeared to, or being presented with something, or being given something. Only in response do we apply concepts, partition the whole, carve it up, interpret it, bring it under a generality, relate it to something else, or whatever it is that the mind does. C.I. Lewis offered the following classic statement (Lewis 1929: 38):

> There are, in our cognitive experience, two elements; the immediate data, such as those of sense, which are presented or given to the mind, and a form, construction, or interpretation, which represents the activity of thought. Recognition of this fact is one of the oldest and most universal of philosophic insights.

Expressed abstractly like that, the basic idea concerns the character of givenness; it stays neutral on what is given. Sense data theorists share this conception of givenness and furthermore believe that what is immediately given is not yet an element of our shared environment. I mention this only to leave it aside. According to the form of dualism with which I will be concerned, the very things around us, the world in which we live, our surroundings themselves are immediately present in perceptual experience. Such a view is known as naïve or direct realism. Charles Travis expresses its central thesis as follows (Travis 2013: 31):

> [*P*]*erception*, as such, simply places our surroundings in view; affords us awareness of them. There is no commitment to their *being* one way or another. It confronts us with what is there, so that, by attending, noting, recognizing, and otherwise exercising what capacities we have, *we* may, in some respect or other, make out what is there for what it is—or, again, fail to.

Perception confronts us with what is there. In other, slightly archaic words, our senses *acquaint* us with our surroundings. "Acquaintance" is here used in a special sense. To be acquainted with someone, in the everyday sense of the word, is more than merely to have crossed paths; it is to have a certain familiarity with - and so to know certain things about - this person. But the dualistic sense of acquaintance is only the having met, without the knowledge thus acquired. This knowledge is supposed to be acquired on the basis of acquaintance. That does not mean that perceptual acquaintance must come temporally before knowledge. Nor does it mean that being acquainted with things would be psychologically distinguishable from telling that they are thus and

so. It may well be that immediately upon seeing a wave I recognise that it is a rising wave, and this recognition need not be an isolable element in my stream of consciousness. Still, so the thought goes, in a logical sense any knowledge I acquire about the wave is posterior to the wave's being present to me. In so far as experience is receptive, a matter of awareness of what is there, it is mere acquaintance with what is there.

That thesis on perceptual awareness is epistemological, in the broad sense of concerning the order of taking something to be so: seeing is prior to knowing and believing (telling). This thesis comes together with what I call the second or ontological thesis of dualism, which is ontological in the broad sense of concerning the order of being so: what is given is a different sort of thing than the sort of thing that can be expressed in words and known to be the case.

One way to draw the distinction is by means of a contrast between the concrete particularity of the sensible world and the generality of thought. For anything that we can think to be so, there are indefinitely many ways for things to be so that they are accordingly. What is before our eyes is the unique way things are here and now. In telling how things are we bring this unique way under a generality. The generality is not before our eyes; it is not part of the sensible world. Apart from this basic idea there is a choice on how to draw the distinction. Some dualists talk of particular cases, state of affairs, or situations, which in judgement we relate to a thought, statement, or proposition. Others talk of property instances, which in judgement we recognise as instances of a type. But for present purposes we can abstract away from the details. The general idea is that *the way something is*, in the sense in which this can be given in experience, is something infinitely particu-

lar, non-repeatable. When I'm looking at a wave, I see the way the wave is as it is here and now. It makes no sense to say of anything else that it is this way. There is no such thing as being the *same* way. It is a property instance, not a property type; a particular case, not a way for a particular case to be. When I tell that the wave is rising I group this unique thing together with other possible cases of a rising wave. I recognise this property instance as being of a certain type; I recognise this particular case as being a case of a rising wave.[2]

Dualism is the combination of both theses. We can summarise the combination as a conception of "seeing that something is the case." A differently inclined philosopher might think that it is possible to *see* - in the sense of visual awareness - that something is the case. In doing so, one would find a conceptual form enmattered in the here and now. There is the matter (the thing that one sees), and there is the form (what and how one sees it to be) — these are different ways of describing one and the same object of experience. But that is not how the dualist thinks of it. To a dualist, form and matter are two separate items which stand in a relation to each other. "Seeing that something is the case" is not a receptive achievement. To see that something is over there, or that one thing is larger than another, or what something is, is really to tell that something is the case on the basis of being given what is out there. To the dualist, anything which can be put into words remains at a remove from what is present in perceptual experience. We can talk about what we see, bring it under a generality, but we cannot

2 Kalderon 2011 and Travis 2013 make this especially explicit. This kind of idea may also be behind the issue of the "fine-grainedness" of experience, when this is seen as a problem for the thesis that experience is conceptually structured.

say what we see.

The ontological and the epistemological thesis confirm each other. Either one can serve as an argument for the other. The dualist may start with the idea that our surroundings are made up of particulars not of generalities, and then argue on this basis that perceptual experience, in so far as it is receptive, can only be awareness of particulars, not already awareness of them falling under generalities. That the evening is setting is not an object in our surroundings; therefore, to see that the evening is setting cannot be a receptive achievement. Conversely, the dualist may argue that because in experience we are caused to see what we do and only make up our mind in response, what we see can only be concrete and particular: facts and propositions are not spatio-temporally located, they do not undergo or effect changes, and so cannot impress itself on our senses or be present in experience; therefore, they are not part of the sensible world. We cannot be given that things are a certain way; we must judge that things are a certain way on the basis of what is given.[3] Thus each conviction is sustained by the other, but it is difficult to argue for them on independent grounds. The dualist feels they are basic requirements of realism: to deny them would be – to borrow a phrase from McDowell - to slight the independence of reality. The world must be given to us, lest it be dependent on the activity of our mind. What is given must be devoid of generality, lest it be abstract and formed so as to fit the shape of our thinking.

3 One could see an argument in either direction in Frege's remark, "*That the sun has risen* is not an object which emits rays that reach my eyes, it is not a visible thing like the sun itself. We judge that the sun has risen on the basis of sense impressions." (Frege 1918: 292; my translation) This remark is central to Travis's defence of naïve realism in Travis 2013.

§3 How things are

Although dualism is a familiar target of criticism, it tends to strike its proponents as only common-sensical. Lewis had this to say about the epistemological thesis (1929: 53):

> [N]o-one but a philosopher could for a moment deny this immediate presence in consciousness of that which no activity of thought can create or alter.

And about the ontological thesis, J.L. Austin wrote the following (Austin 1950: 117):

> When a statement is true, there is, *of course*, a state of affairs which makes it true and which is *toto mundo* distinct from the true statement about it: but equally of course, we can only describe that state of affairs *in words* (either the same or, with luck, others).

It is indeed undeniable that there is something truistic in those statements. But a philosopher can affirm a truism and meanwhile smuggle in a substantial thesis — which is, I believe, just what the dualist does. So the first thing I need to show is that dualism is not obvious, that it is committed to something contentious: a reduction of *how* things are to an object of reference and acquaintance.

That we only see particulars, and that only in response we bring them under a generality, is not as common-sensical as it may sound. We do not just see things, but in doing so we see *how* things are. Of course, we can see something perfectly clearly and yet not see how it is in various respects. But what would the presence of things be if it were not at least

a matter of seeing how things are spatially arranged over time? During a walk along the beach I may see, for example, that the dunes are over here and the sea is over there, that a couple is walking towards a beach house, dragging a buggy behind them, that the wind is ruffling the feathers of a sandpiper, that a wave is washing over a stranded jelly fish, unfastening it, retreating and leaving behind some debris. What I mean to describe here is my seeing what I do — I describe that which I see in the way that I see it. My description is given in response to seeing it, but what it means to capture, express, is my perceptual experience itself. My surroundings' being present to me articulates into these sayable aspects, among indefinitely many others. I can see, and also say, that there is some seaweed lying over there. Nor is this sort of thing limited to spatial location. To see how things are spatio-temporally arranged is also to grasp a causal order, which things are moving themselves and which are moving others, and how — which means that it is also a matter of seeing what animals and people are doing. Not to mention such things as hearing or seeing meaning in spoken or written words, emotion in a voice, face or bodily posture.

But according to dualism, to see that something is the case is a response to perceptual experience. It is to bring what is present under a generality; to group it together with possibilities that are not present. The dualist can acknowledge that seeing things is seeing how things are. But he can only acknowledge this by distinguishing “seeing how things are” in this sense from “knowing that something is the case.” Correspondingly, he will distinguish what is seen in the first from what is known in the second: “how things are,” in the sense in which this can be given in experience, is not what we say in saying how things are. It

is rather a thing to speak or think *about*: a state of affairs, particular case, property instance, or whatever the preferred idiom may be. Wanting to accommodate the fact that the world consists not just of things but of how things are, the dualist is moved to construe how things are as a particular; concrete and unique, non-repeatable, a token of a type. He will distinguish, for example, between the wind's ruffling the feathers of a sandpiper, awareness of which may be perceptual, and *that* the wind is ruffling the feathers of a sandpiper, awareness of which is cognitive. In the sense in which we can see how things are we cannot say how things are; and in the sense in which we can say how things are we cannot see how things are.

You can recognise a dualist by this attempt to construe *how* things are as something else than what we say in saying how things are, and as itself a thing to refer to, something which we cannot know (*savoir*) but only be acquainted with (*connaître*). To some, that may seem absurd enough to conclude that dualism is a myth – the elusive "Myth of the Given". It would be a logical mistake to construe "how the sky is" as an *object*, like the sky itself. The sense that nothing more needs to be said may account for the felt lack of argument on the side of dualism's opponents (a complaint voiced in Kalderon 2011 and Travis forthcoming). Conversely, the dualist will accuse his opponent of equivocating over two senses of how things are, the sense in which it can be said, and the sense in which it determines the truth or falsity of what is said.[4] All I have meant to show so far is that the form which this dis-

4 "McDowell misconceives sensory presentation as conceptual representation, in part, by conflating property exemplification with the content of a possible predication … ." (Kalderon 2011: 240)

tinction takes in dualism is a contentious thesis: how things are, in the sense in which this can be given in experience, is an object of reference and acquaintance. The task remaining is to show that this thesis is mistaken.

§4 Out of mind's reach

The general objection against dualism is that it places the world out of mind's reach. It is not difficult to get a sense for the basic idea. For our words not to be idle or empty, out of touch with the world, we have to be able to know, on occasion, not merely what it is true to say but why it is true to say that. One can think of this as what it means to *know* what it is true to say: knowing is knowing the reason why. For a basic kind of belief, perceptual experience is the way to acquire such knowledge. When I believe that the sky is blue, and I believe this because the sky itself is present to me in experience, its being present to me is my reason for thinking that the sky is blue; and if I am right, what is present is the reason why it is true to think that the sky is blue. But according to dualism, this reason (either the presence or what is present) is not the sort of thing that can be put into words. I can refer to it, talk *about* it, but I cannot say *it*. And so it seems that the dualist has to claim that I cannot *say* why it is true that the sky is blue, or why I am justified to believe this; and that I cannot know, but only be acquainted with, my reason for thinking that the sky is blue. The criticism is that this would mean that the reason stays obscure to the mind, so that it cannot be my reason for thinking what I do.

Let me first briefly discuss the problem of acquaintance. The dualist

tends to emphasise the fact that in perceptual experience things are immediately present to us. The view that in experience we represent things as being some way is thought to be in contradiction with this. But I want to contrast dualism with a view according to which the presence of things in experience *is* the subject's self-consciously knowing how things are. That seems to me the right view. From this perspective, the dualistic separation of understanding and the presence of things in experience leaves too little for the latter to be a self-conscious awareness of how things are. It could at best be the sort of awareness that we undergo when we're being distracted by a buzzing noise without noticing: the kind of case in which it makes sense to say that our ears, but not *we*, are hearing something. But to suffer sense impressions in that way is not yet to be in possession of a reason for judgement, even though that is just what it is supposed to be according to dualism.

For example, when I listen to a song I do not merely hear sounds; I hear the way these sounds hang together to form rhythms, melodies, chords, chord progressions, and so on. But this is just to hear that they hang together in such and such ways, and that is something which I can also say: I can say, for example, that I am hearing an A minor chord or a perfect fifth. But to grasp what I can also say – that things are thus and so – is something which, according to dualism, I do on the basis of perceptual awareness. Abstracting away from it, what I am supposed to be literally *hearing* is not already a chord or a melody as such.[5] I hear

5 "As such" is somewhat redundant. A dualist would say that what I hear is in fact a chord or a melody. But if I do not hear it as such, it is perfectly natural to say that I do not *hear* the *melody*. The use of "hear" is the intentional use Anscombe draws attention to in Anscombe 1965.

mere notes without yet grasping the connections. But without grasping the connections I do not hear *notes* as such; they are, so far, mere sounds to me.[6] But if dualism is right, even to judge that these sounds are distinguished from the background noise is something that I must do on the basis of literally hearing what is there. But now what kind of "hearing" is this? In what sense am I still aware of what is there at all? To receive auditory input, without grasping any structure, is merely having one's ears open, not yet using them to listen.

This is just one example of a general phenomenon, extensively described by philosophers working in a Kantian tradition.[7] If to be aware of the particular case has to be mere acquaintance, this awareness would lack the togetherness needed for it to be self-conscious awareness, bearing rationally on what we are to think and do — and so the supposed object of awareness would be out of mind's reach. C.I. Lewis may be right that no activity of mind can *create* what is immediately present, but it can - and normally does - *inform* human sensibility, so that our sensing can be our grasping how things hang together.

The above may be summarised in the catchphrase "perceptual experience is already conceptually shaped". But given the ontological thesis of dualism, this is apt to be misunderstood. It is apt to be misunderstood as saying that before the conscious subject comes onto the scene, her perceptual experience is already conceptual*ised*: subconsciously the non-conceptual given is *transformed* into something conceptual. That is a

6 If I momentarily fail to hear a connection between notes, they will not by that fact cease to be notes to me. But if I am deaf to such connections, I lack the capacity to hear notes.

7 See, for example, Strawson 1974 and Longuenesse 1998.

common reading of Kant. More recently we find it in Travis's responses to McDowell (see Travis 2004, 2007, and forthcoming). Surely some philosophers have wanted to defend a view along those lines. But it is not what McDowell meant, and it is not what I mean. To say that experience is conceptually shaped, a matter of seeing that something is the case, is to say that a fact can be immediately manifest in perceptual experience: right there before one's eyes. There is no conceptual*ising* to do, because the world itself is already conceptually shaped. This does not make sense against the background of the ontological thesis of dualism, and so the dualist simply does not hear it in this way. Even if a conception of perceptual givenness forms one of the main motivations for the ontological thesis, it is not the only one, and to argue against it does not thereby upset the ontological thesis. We must tackle that thesis head-on.

The ontological thesis means that what is given is something ineffable, something which cannot be made available for discursive deliberation in the way that a thought can. But what is the problem with that? It seems one may accuse a philosopher of trying the impossible when something thought-like is supposed to be ineffable – an ineffable insight, an ineffable idea. But what could be the problem with unsayable things in the world? To say that the sky is blue is not to say the sky, but to bring the sky under a generality. One may hear this kind of response in Austin's remark, quoted above. But Austin does not speak of ordinary objects of reference, he speaks of states of affairs, and this play just the role that such terms do in dualism generally.[8] The prob-

8 This is evident from his theory of truth: "A statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative con-

lem is not with the claim that *the sky* cannot be said, but that one cannot even say *how* the sky is. Dualism construes "how the sky is" as a particular which in thinking is brought under a generality.

For the sake of convenience, let us refer to this particular as a property instance, *the blue of the sky* (another option would be: *the sky's being blue)*. According to dualism, for me to see that the sky is blue is really for me to tell (judge) that the blue of the sky instantiates a certain type: the property of being blue. What is present to me is the reason why it is true to say that the sky is blue. So why is it true to say that the sky is blue? The blue of the sky. So far, this reference to the blue of the sky is lacking a propositional context. Of course it makes sense to refer to something in order to say why a judgement is true or justified. But referring to something is done in the context of, or as a preparation for, saying how it is. I can say, "It is true to say that the sky is blue because the sky is, in fact, blue," — here I refer to the sky, within the context of saying how it is. I can also say that it is true because of the sky, but that calls for a further specification: surely it's true because of something about the sky - the condition it is in, a certain way it is - and what else than that it is blue? But dualism construes the condition it is in as something which I can only refer to. So at the point where I would want to say how the sky is, all I can do is refer to something. But I can only refer to something in the context of saying what or how it is. The dualist has deprived me of the context in which referring would make sense.

If that it is the problem with dualism, it would make sense of McDow-

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ventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions." (Austin 1950: 116)

ell's criticism of the Myth of the Given in *Mind and World*. McDowell's discussion focusses on the role of perceptual experience in providing an ultimate justification for an empirical belief. To fall into the Myth of the Given would be to think that this ultimate justification, what is given in experience, cannot be conceptually structured. If I believe that something is the case, and I believe this in a way that can be traced back to an experience I've had, I would ultimately, in defending my belief, have to point to what was given to me. The reason for my belief - and if I am right, the reason it is true - would not be the sort of thing that can be expressed in words (McDowell 1994: 6):

> The idea is that when we have exhausted all the available moves within the space of concepts, all the available moves from one conceptually organized item to another, there is still one more step to take: namely, pointing to something that is simply received in experience.

But what is wrong with pointing to something? McDowell doesn't say. But we can now see what the problem is. If "what is given" is construed as an object of acquaintance, which replaces how things are, pointing to this object takes the place of saying how things are, and so this pointing would lack a propositional context. It would be empty, failing even to refer to what is given – less like an assertion than like a noise made when one is at a loss for words.

But this may be too quick. At this stage in the dialectic, it still seems something else can be done besides trying to point to what is given. I can say that what is given is the reason why it is true to say that the sky is blue: the blue of the sky is a truth-maker for the proposition that the sky is blue. Given a more determinate understanding of what that

comes to, there is also something more determinate I can say. For example, I can say that what is given is the type of thing it is: the blue of the sky is an instance of blueness. Doesn't that mean that what is given is within mind's reach after all?

It is true that dualists do not generally feel tempted to refer to what is given outside the context of a proposition. Instead of pointing to what is given, they relate it to something conceptual. They say something like, "The blue of the sky instantiates the property of being blue."[9] Although in a certain sense this says the same as "The sky is blue," it is supposed to make something manifest which is not yet manifest in that shorter formulation. The shorter formulation brings the sky under a generality: the concept of being blue. But what makes this true is a particular instance of falling under this generality: an instantiation of being blue. So for philosophical purposes it is not enough to say that the predication is true because the sky is blue. That would only be to say that it is *type* blue. It is true to say this, to say that the sky is type blue, because the sky is *token* blue. The blue of the sky is the reason that it is true to say that the sky is blue. And the blue of the sky is a token of a property.

But when the dualist says this, he is failing to apply his own standards to his own view. "The sky is token blue" is again a predication. It brings the sky under the concept of being token blue. But what makes this true, the dualist should say, is a particular instance of falling under this

9 One can replace this by any theory of truth according to which for a thought (thinkable content, proposition, etc.) to be true is for it to stand in some relation to some given thing (particular case, fact, property instance, etc.). See Hornsby 1997 for an insightful discussion of such views.

generality: an instantiation of being token blue. It is not enough to say that the predication is true because the sky is token blue (that would be to say that it is type token blue); rather, it is true because the sky is *token token* blue. And so on forever. It may seem that the dualist can stop after the first step: the reason it is true to say, "The sky is blue," is that the sky is token blue, but that is where the chain stops: there is no further reason why it is true to say that the sky is token blue. But to stop there is to conceive the world as conceptually structured: we can say that the sky is token blue, and that the sky is token blue can be there in the world. The idea of dualism would be lost. Once an exception to the ontological thesis is admitted, there seems no reason to hang on to it at all: if that the sky is token blue is there in the world, why not also that it is blue?

The dualist feels a certain dissatisfaction with the perspective we take up when in everyday life we say how things are using the words that we do. When we say, "The sky is blue," this fails to transparently reveal how this thought stands to reality. For philosophical purposes it would be insufficient to say that the judgement is true because the sky is blue. To say merely that would be to go around in a circle within the conceptual sphere. The ultimate reason a judgement is true, which is given in experience, is not the sort of thing that we can think; it is the sort of thing that we can only think about. But this same dissatisfaction should extend to the relational formulation. It should be obvious that if saying, "The sky is blue," is to remain confined within the conceptual sphere, then there is no point in paraphrasing this as, "The blue of the sky instantiates the property of being blue," or any other formulation like that. Say that the dualist would accept this point. If he would non-

etheless retain the picture of the world as lying beyond the conceptual sphere, he would now, having rejected talk of a relation between thought and given, have no option left but to point to what is given. What makes a thought true is really not the relation, but the worldly *relatum*. In answer to the question "Why is it true that the sky is blue?" the dualist has to say something equivalent to "things"; not to "how things are," even if it is his analysis of "how things are." But this pointing is empty: having rejected the relation, it can now not anymore be understood as a way of saying anything.

§5 Fregean Monism

1 If the problem with dualism is that it construes what is given as something to refer to, something which we can only speak *about*, the answer would seem to be that we can say what is given. It is true that the world consists of such things as sand and waves, things we can only speak about. But things are not divorced from how they are. When a wave is before my eyes, then so is how it is: for instance how it is shaped and coloured, and where it is over time. Such aspects of the layout of reality can be manifest to me in experience, and I can also put them into words. I then talk about the wave, but not *about* how it is — I *say* how it is. With that I reach the world, that which determines whether my judgement is true or false: it is true to say that the wave is rising because it is, in fact, rising. The world is "Everything that is the case," as it is said in the opening lines of the Tractatus, "the totality of facts, not of things." (TLP 1-1.1) And that something is the case can also be manifest in experience: to see things is to see that something is the case. (TLP 5.5423) That answer is what I call *monism*.

2 In *Mind and World*, John McDowell defends a form of monism. He combines the Tractarian slogan with the idea that to speak truly is for the thing that one says to be a fact (27):

> [T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case …, there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world.

Correspondingly, he defends a conception of perceptual experience as seeing that something is the case (9):

> In experience one takes in, for instance sees, *that things are thus and so*. That is the sort of thing one can also, for instance, judge.

These remarks are not supposed to be substantial theses. What may seem to be theses are really meant as reminders of something which outside of our studies we do not forget. They are, once disengaged from a more substantial understanding, undeniable: they are truisms (27):

> But to say there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world is just to dress up a truism in high-flown language. All the point comes to is that one can think, for instance, *that spring has begun*, and that very same thing, *that spring has begun*, can be the case. That is truistic, and it cannot embody something metaphysically contentious, like slighting the independence of reality.

The point of issuing these reminders is to dispel sceptical anxieties

about the contentfulness of thought, and thereby also to dispel the sense that a more substantial conception of the relation between mind and world would be possible or needed, in particular the kinds of conception which I have grouped together under dualism. But as I will now argue briefly, and in more depth in chapter IV, we cannot understand McDowell's reminders as truistic within the philosophical framework in which he develops them.

3 McDowell thinks that philosophers cannot accept the truisms, and instead fall into the Myth of the Given, because they are under a restricted conception of causality. On the restricted conception, any causal interaction is in essence understood the way things are understood in natural science—according to some variant of the picture, maybe more sophisticated, of a dent made in the clay tablet of the mind. But we cannot make sense of *reason* in this way; in particular, of the way judgements hang together according to relations of justification. So it comes to seem that experience, if it consists of the impressions which our surroundings make on our senses, cannot constitute a reason for judgement. But then again, it must, lest our concepts be empty, and our thinking be "a frictionless spinning in a void." (11) A philosopher falls into the Myth of the Given when she thinks of nature in this restricted way and nonetheless feels - correctly - that experience must bear rationally on what we are to think and do. She will then take what is given to be non-conceptual; nonetheless she will insist - incoherently - that this non-conceptual thing is a reason for judgement. McDowell thinks that we can avoid the Myth of the Given when we remove the restriction on our conception of nature. He reminds us that nature

includes *second* nature, which in the human case includes the capacity for speaking a language. By learning a language, we also develop a second nature for drawing on our conceptual capacities in perceptual experience. This allows for experience to be a transaction in nature which is nonetheless conceptually shaped. "Impressions can *be* cases of its perceptually appearing - its being apparent - to a subject that things are thus and so." (McDowell 1994: xx) This in turn allows us to accept the truism that the world is everything that is the case, and that in experience it can be manifest that something is the case (26-8).

But although McDowell allows for sensibility informed by the understanding, he still wants to separate understanding and the capacity for judgement. He inherits this idea from Frege, though it has its source in modern philosophy in the fourth *Meditation* of Descartes. There the narrator writes, "All that the intellect does is enable me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgement; and when regarded strictly in this light, it turns out to contain no error in the proper sense of the term." (Descartes, 1641: 95) The understanding or intellect is here thought of as a faculty of perception, and the very idea that understanding is perceiving means that it cannot yet be judging. To perceive something, Descartes thinks, is not yet a matter of taking a stance on how things are. So if understanding is perceiving, then to understand something, to grasp an idea, is likewise not yet a matter of taking a stance.

This also means that *what* the understanding perceives is, considered as such, without the force of judgement. It is not what we claim in claiming that the sky is blue, but the mere idea of the sky's being blue. And so the separation of understanding and judgement goes together with

what, since Frege, is known as the distinction of content and force. What "perceiving the subject of judgement" is for Descartes, that mentioning a thinkable content is for Frege. The content of a judgement is not the claim that the sky *is* blue but the thing which we claim: that the sky is blue (try to hear the combination of copula and verb without force). In judging we add assertoric force to the thinkable content: the idea of a blue sky is on our mind, and moreover, we affirm that things are this way. It is within this dualistic framework, which will be the topic of the next chapter, that McDowell offers an account of perceptual experience as conceptually shaped.

This comes to expression in two ways. First, although sensibility is informed by the understanding, it is not thereby a matter of takinga stance on how things are. The understanding is the capacity for using concepts; so to say that sensibility is informed by the understanding is to say that conceptual capacities are used in some way. But since experience is passive, separate from the will, these conceptual capacities cannot already be exercised; they are, as McDowell puts it, "drawn on" or "passively actualised". Just this is supposed to save McDowell's view from being a subjectivist form of idealism. It would be idealistic to think of experience as a form of judgement, a matter of exercising conceptual capacities, but it is not idealistic to think of it as involving the passive actualisation of conceptual capacities (10):

In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, in the content's being available to one, before one has any choice in the matter. The content is not something one has put together oneself, as when one decides what to say about something. In fact it is precisely because experience is passive, a matter of receptivity in op-

eration, that the conception of experience I am recommending can satisfy the craving for a limit to freedom that underlies the Myth of the Given.

Second, McDowell follows Frege in distinguishing between an act of judgement and the content of such an act. The possible content of a judgement is "given by a 'that' clause" (3); it is what is referred to by an instance of the scheme "that things are thus and so". This use of "that things are thus and so" as a referring expression pervades *Mind and World*. That is why McDowell's reminders take the form that they do: the very same *thing* which can be said can also be seen and be the case. The bearer of a truth value is, as such, something to refer to, even though in thinking we do not refer to it but think it. It is a thing, but a thinkable thing. Again this idea is supposed to save McDowell's view from "slighting the independence of reality" (27). It would be idealistic to think of the world as made up of acts of thinking. But it is not idealistic to claim that the world is made up of the true contents of such acts (28):

'Thought' can mean the act of thinking; but it can also mean the *content* of a piece of thinking: what someone thinks. Now if we are to give due acknowledgement to the independence of reality, what we need is a constraint from outside *thinking* and *judging*, our exercises of spontaneity. The constraint does not need to be from outside *thinkable contents*.

Now the central ideas of monism are understood in a surprising way. The dualistic background assumptions make for what I call *Fregean monism*, which, despite the name, is like monism in the way that a fata morgana is like an oasis. That the world is "everything that is the case" is understood to mean that the world is every thinkable *thing* that is the

case: the totality of true thinkable contents. Similarly, that "seeing things is seeing that things are thus and so" is understood to mean that in experience we are presented with a thinkable content. To be thus represented to is not already to take a stance on how things are. It is merely to be under an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so; in response we can either take this appearance at face value, as would be the default, or reject it as an illusion (26):

> *That things are thus and so* is the content of an experience, and it can also be the content of a judgement. It becomes the content of a judgement when one decides to take the experience at face value. … So it is conceptual content. But *that things are thus and so* is also, if one is not misled, an aspect of the layout of the world: it is how things are.

McDowell presents these ideas as Kantian, in terms of a contrast between the spontaneity of discursive activity and the receptivity of perceptual experience. What is at issue, though, is not so much that contrast as such, but its alignment with the contrast between activity and passivity, which comes from Descartes and more immediately from Frege (Kant himself speaks of experience in the first person and the active voice). Jennifer Hornsby, in a defence of McDowell's view on truth, considers the objection that this view supposes that "by denying any gap between thought and world, one commits oneself to a sort of idealism." (Hornsby 1997: 1) But that, she writes, would be a confusion of people's thinking with the content of their thoughts. To say that the world is made up of acts of thinking would be idealistic, but it is not idealistic to say that the world is made up of true thinkable contents. But one does not have to confuse people's thinking of things with the

content of their thoughts in order to find this view idealistic in a problematic way, or maybe the problem is that it is not idealistic enough. The problem is just this separation between understanding and judgement which is supposed to save the view from idealism.

One basic problem is that McDowell needs the determination of a truth-evaluable content to be passive in a way that contrasts with the activity of judgement. It is not something that merely happens to one in the way that a blow to the head does; exactly not: that is the point of saying that sensibility is informed by the understanding. But it is still passive in a way that contrasts with taking a stance on how things are. Without doing anything, in this sense, one can be under an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so, an appearance which one can then either accept at face value or reject as an illusion. But if in experience we lack the agency to take a stance on how things are, then how can we have the agency to determine a truth evaluable content? Or the other way around, if we have the agency to determine a truth evaluable content, then how can we lack the agency to take a stance on how things are? It is not as if we generally find apt words to describe a scene and then decide to mean it, too. Finding apt words and meaning what we say are not two separate acts, the first a preparation for the second. McDowell himself emphasises as much in this defence of essentially *de re* sense (McDowell 1984, 2005). If thinkable content, to be genuinely content, must refer to what it purports to, then to "have content available to one" cannot be separate from taking a stance on how things are. To have content available to one is already to know that the referring terms in it do refer. The good idea of essentially *de re* senses does not go together with the separation of judgement and understanding, and so

also not with the separation between judgement and sensibility informed by the understanding.

Relatedly, it is not as if normally we can hold an experience at arm's length and decide to take it at face value or reject it as an illusion. McDowell would not deny this. The two-part structure is supposed to be the logical structure of experience. It may be a shallow *ad hominem* to object that constructive metaphysics is just this kind of postulation of a logical structure hidden underneath what is manifest to the thinking, perceiving subject. To do so cannot go together with McDowell's insistence that he is merely issuing reminders. A more principled objection is that the structure he postulates could never be the surface structure. It could not be that I generally had to decide whether or not to take appearances at face value. If I did, I would be so alienated from my surroundings that I would not have anything to go on to make the decision. The picture McDowell presents would fit someone who was in the position which a radical sceptic fears he is in. It thus exactly fails to dispel sceptical anxieties about how the world could possibly be within mind's reach.

Those objections concern the epistemological structure of McDowell's account of experience. Another line of objection concerns his ontological "truism": his conception of the world as the totality of true thinkable contents. Even if it is truistic, as McDowell claims, that the world is everything that is the case, this ceases to be truistic when it is understood to mean that the world is the totality of true thinkable contents. Referring to a thinkable, reflecting on it, it seems the wrong sort of thing to impress itself on our senses, be present in experience, or constitute the sensible world. I look around, and I find leaves lying on

the ground, barren branches against a pale blue sky, the sun cascading on wet stones, but no matter how hard I look, nowhere do I find the thinkable content *that the leaves are on the ground*. What can be present to me in experience, what I find around me on my way through the world, are things that undergo and effect changes, and have a spatio-temporal location; not such things as "that things are thus and so". It is true, on the view which I will eventually defend, that one can see that the leaves are on the ground, but this is to see the leaves, and, in doing so, to see where they are; it is not to see a thinkable thing. Now it is not that McDowell would deny that concrete particulars impress themselves on our senses and are present to us. He would say that they do. But what this means, according to him, is that we are presented with thinkable content, which in response we take at face value. This referential perspective on a thinkable content encourages ontological questions which McDowell would prefer to set aside. It makes it reasonable to respond as the dualist does: a thinkable content is not the sort of thing which undergoes or affects changes, and so not the sort of thing to impress itself on our senses or be present in experience.

So the reason dualists cannot accept McDowell's reminders is not necessarily that they are under a restricted conception of causality. Rather, within the framework McDowell shares with dualism these supposed truisms are substantial philosophical theses which face various problems. One could tinker with the view to answer some of these problems, but that would only hide the fact that they have their source in a central feature of *Mind and World*: the separation of understanding and judgement which is supposed to allow McDowell to steer a middle course between the Myth of the Given and a frictionless spinning in a

void. McDowell underestimates the attractions of dualism. A restricted conception of causality is only one route to dualism. The more general idea is that awareness is not yet to take a stance on how things are. And that idea McDowell endorses. One could say that his conception of the Myth of the Given is only one special case, and although he avoids this special case, he falls into the more general form of the Myth.

§6 Monism

1 If the problem with dualism is that it construes what is given, how things are, as something to refer to, then the answer is that we can say how things are. But it is a mistake to hear this as: the thing which we say is the very same thing as the thing which is how things are. By taking up this perspective of referring to "what we say" and "how things are" we would contradict the insight in the moment of stating it, as the Fregean monist does. It may be inevitable that the correction to dualism will at first take such a form. We have to refer to "what we say" and "how things are" in order to say that these are not really things to refer to; that is, not really *things*. They are not really things which in judgement we relate to each other, not even the relation of identity. But we can get away from this referential perspective when instead we take up the perspective of judgement.

When we say how things are we do not have "what we say" on our mind. When I think that the wave is rising what is on my mind is not the thinkable content *that the wave is rising*. That the wave is rising is what I *think*, but what I think *of* is the wave: I think of the wave that it is rising. The content is not on my mind but part of my mind: it consti-

tutes my standpoint on reality.[10] So if judgement were any sort of relation it would be a relation between the thing named and the way it is said to be; in this case, between *the wave* and *rising*. But this cannot be a relation at all, on pain of an infinite regress. (To think that the wave is rising would be to think that the wave and rising stand in a relation R, but that would be another case of judgement, and so we would have to repeat the analysis: to think that would be to think that the wave, R, and rising stand in a relation R', and so on.) It is rather the unity thought in combining subject and predicate. By thinking together subject and predicate I think together what I think of and how I think it to be; and if I think truly, then the very thing I think of is the very way I think it is.

But this does not make sense against the background of the distinction of force and content. The central idea behind that distinction is that to combine subject and predicate is not yet to make a judgement. It is only to form a thinkable content; to hold this content to be true is an additional act. But if judgement is not a matter of combining subject and predicate, it must instead be a matter of doing something with the combination of subject and predicate. It comes to seem that in a judgement we have the thinkable content on our mind, which we then predicate something of: to judge that the sky is blue is to judge that *that the sky is blue* is the same as how things are (McDowell), or reaches to the particu-

10 I am borrowing a phrase, and an idea, from Peter Sullivan: "neither the sentence nor the thought obtrudes itself as the object of consideration, or obstructs one's view of things. Quite the reverse. The sentence understood, the thought, *constitutes* one's view of things. That is what was meant earlier when I said that sentences of a language which expresses thoughts present a standpoint of reflection." (Sullivan 2004: 733)

lar case (Travis), or is a fact (early Frege), or is the True (later Frege). So we are led away from the standpoint of judgement (in the sense of above) to a standpoint of judging about the thinkable content. It comes to seem that this is the standpoint of judgement.

Such a conception must anyway be rejected. The problem is that on this view a thinkable content is not the sort of thing one can think; one can only think that the thinkable content is true (or something synonymous with that). Of course the Fregean will insist that when one thinks that the sky is blue, what one thinks is *that the sky is blue*. But what this means, according to his theory, is that one thinks that *that the sky is blue* is true (or something synonymous). Judgement is construed as predicating something of a thinkable content. But if predication is generally without force, not yet a matter of judgement, the same would hold for predicating truth of the thinkable content. Frege acknowledges this, and at some point in the dialectic, any Fregean must. But in so far as he is Fregean, he still cannot think of judgement as a matter of combining subject and predicate. And so he will still feel that there is a difference between the claim that the sky is blue, which is in itself without force, and the claim that it is *true* that the sky is blue, even though this now cannot anymore be acknowledged.

The idea that predication is without force comes from thinking of a thinkable content as essentially what is perceived in a moment of passive apprehension, as Descartes did, or essentially what is mentioned without making a claim, as Frege did. But a thinkable content is essentially something to think - to make (conceive) in the sense of making a claim - and only secondarily something to mention or perceive. We should not analyse making a claim as consisting of two acts, a passive

moment of "content's being available to one" and an act of endorsement or rejection. To find the words for what one wants to say, and meaning what one says, are not two separate acts, the first a preparation for the second. In a basic case, to combine subject and predicate *is* to form a judgement or claim. It is true that one can mention a claim without making it, or use it in other ways which withhold assent, but what is then mentioned is still the sort of thing which one can also make, the kind of thing to which one could assent or dissent: not the forceless thinkable that the sky is blue, but the claim that the sky *is* blue. We can agree with a claim, or disagree with a claim; we cannot agree or disagree with a forceless thinkable content (only with the claim that it is true or false). Along these lines we can avoid the Fregean two-stage analysis of judgement. It will be the task of the next chapter to develop this alternative.

2 That is a correction to the dualistic conception of judgement. We also have to reject the dualistic conception of perceptual awareness as mere acquaintance. If the problem with dualism is that it construes being given something as mere acquaintance, then the answer is that seeing is knowing: to see how the wave is is to know, among other things, that it is rising. Just as things are not divorced from how they are, so seeing things is not divorced from seeing how things are. For things to be present to the perceiving subject *is* for her to see how they are: for instance how they are spatio-temporally arranged, shaped and coloured, and - in the case of animals - what they are doing. "Seeing that the wave is rising" can be genuinely a receptive achievement, a matter of awareness of what is there before our eyes.

Of course, one may see something perfectly clearly and yet fail to tell how it is in various respects. When I see a sandpiper I may still fail to recognise it as a sandpiper, or not until later, or I may fail to even have the concept of a sandpiper — and yet nothing needs to be lacking in my experience of the bird. My experience puts me in a position in which I can, if I exercise an additional capacity, come to know that this is a sandpiper, but it is not itself already knowing this. In so far dualism is right. The presence of things constitutes a potential for knowledge: it makes us, as Mark Eli Kalderon puts it, knowledge*able* of our surroundings. (Kalderon 2011: 225) But recognising something as being some way is done on the basis of awareness of how it is. How can I recognise the bird as a sandpiper if I do not at least see how it is shaped and coloured, where it is over time, and what it is doing? The knowledge potential afforded by experience resides, like all potential, in something actual: a self-conscious awareness of how things are.[11]

Sometimes one fails to have a *self-conscious* awareness of how things are. Say that a buzzing noise is distracting me from my work; I only realise this once it stops (it was the fridge). In such a case my sensing, and my knowing what I am doing, are two separate acts. I do not know what I am doing in and in virtue of doing what I do; I only know it in virtue of an act of recognition which is separate from my sensory awareness. One could say that my ears are registering the noise, but with a certain special emphasis on the first-person pronoun, *I* am not hearing it. Experience is more than merely a matter of receiving sense impressions. Or better, it is just receiving sense impressions, but when my

11 This corresponds to McDowell's argument about recognising a cardinal as such in McDowell 2008.

senses are a seamless aspect of the unity which I am, informed by my understanding, for my senses to receive sense impressions is for me to see how things are around me. (Just as my feet transporting me forwards on the pavement, may be, on an occasion, my doing groceries.) I then know what I am doing in and in virtue of doing it. (Just as it is by being awake that I know that I am awake.)

Sometimes one fails to have a self-conscious awareness of *how things are* in some important respect. A familiar case is that of listening to an unfamiliar language. If I hear people speak in a language I do not know, then not only do I not hear the meaning in their words, I cannot even hear where one word ends and the next one begins. No matter how hard I focus, I do not hear the sounds they make as words, even though I can recognise that they are words. Generally I do have the capacity to grasp more familiar kinds of unity in my surroundings, such as the causal connection between a person, the movement of his legs, and his process across the promenade. But it is imaginable that I would fail to have this capacity, as I fail sometimes to properly exercise the capacity. Think of being under an illusion that a mime artist's arms and legs are being pulled by strings, and then reassuring yourself that he is moving them himself. When things fall into place this shows in a dramatic way what normally, being at home in the world, is always already there. (The mime artist affords the pleasure of a temporary and local alienation, and the hint of a deeper horror.)

In both of these cases, I fail to have a self-conscious awareness of how things are; still, in some sense, I am enjoying perceptual awareness. One may think that because I can fail to see that something is the case without failing to see at all, seeing cannot be seeing that something is

the case. It must be being presented with something on the basis of which I can *tell* that something is the case. Being presented with something is what would be there both in the good and the bad case, but in the bad case my response would be off. But what the good case and the bad have in common is not something on the basis of which I can make a judgement. Of course, if my experience is only bad in one respect, then I can still make judgements on the basis of what I do see: if I cannot individuate the words of a foreign language, I might still be able to hear the sounds being made, and recognise that this is meaningful interaction of some sort. But if the first moment is supposed to be devoid of understanding altogether, then it is just not the moment of being given that on the basis of which I can make a judgement. We can only think of failure as a deprivation, a departure from the norm, which is determined by a successful exercise of the capacity for perception. Such a failure is perception only in a qualified sense. To see things (when "seeing things" is said without qualification) is to see how they are; more specifically, that they are thus and so.

3 This illustrates some of what it means for experience to be a self-conscious awareness of how things are. But how *can* experience be that? Dualism, and the dualism inherent in Fregean monism, offers various reasons for thinking this impossible. Reviewing and answering these objections will allow me to develop my view further.

First objection

What impresses itself on our senses, and thus becomes present in perceptual experience, is concrete and particular. Although we do speak of "seeing that

the wave is rising," this cannot be a matter of receptivity. That the wave is rising, or the concept of rising, is not something which is before our eyes. We tell that something is the case on the basis of the presence of things in experience. (Cf. Frege 1918: 292)

This is the ontological thesis of dualism. When it is stated naïvely, as if it is just obvious that the world is made up of particulars, the mistake is to forget that things are not divorced from how they are. When a wave is before my eyes, then so is the way it manifestly is. The dualist actually has more in mind than just the naïve idea: he conceives of the way things manifestly are as again a particular. But this, I have argued, is a mistake.

An analogous mistake in the theory of judgement (see chapter II) leads the Fregean to construe *that the wave is rising* as an object, so that "seeing that the wave is rising" is parsed as awareness of *that the wave is rising*. Since this latter thing is not to be found among the things in our surroundings, the Fregean concludes that "seeing that the wave is rising" cannot be seeing in the sense of visual awareness. It really consists of two acts: a passive moment of acquaintance with something concrete and particular, and an act of bringing it under an abstract generality.

When we reject the two-stage analysis of judgement generally, we can also reject - what is really a special case of it - this two-stage analysis of "seeing that". To see that the wave is rising, when this is really seeing, is not to be aware of an abstract object; it is to see the wave, and in doing so, to see how it is: rising. "That the wave is rising" is a specification of how the wave is. And how the wave manifestly is is there before my eyes when the wave is before my eyes, but of course not as an additional

item. The world consists of things I can think of, but also, and of course not as an additional item, of how they are.

I am not denying that a thought has a certain generality. What one grasps in seeing that something is the case is repeatable: something else, or the same thing at another time and place, may be the same way. But why should only what is unique be visible? That conviction led to the impossible attempt to construe what is given as something ineffable. The dualist may be impressed by the fact that there are many ways of being some way. For example, there are many ways of being blue: painted blue, naturally blue, light blue, dark blue, and so on. But in so far as these are all ways of being blue, they are all ways of being the same. It is true that the blue of the sky is unique, in a way: nothing else can be blue in exactly the same way. But in another way it is a repeatable: in so far as the sky is blue, it is the same as the blue car, and the blue lake: that is the point of using the same concept. It is a mistake to move from the fact that the blue of the sky is different in *other* respects to the thesis that the blue of the sky is absolutely unique and distinct from what we express by means of the concept of blue.

Second objection

For things to be present to me is not for me to apply concepts. Perceptual awareness is an achievement of the senses, not of the understanding. My senses present me with my surroundings; in response I make up my mind about which concepts to apply. There are a number of reasons why this must be so.

(a) Experience is determined by a causal interaction in which the perceiver is the patient. By contrast, concepts have their place in the activity of reason. We

cannot make sense of the application of a concept as merely the upshot of a causal process. But we can understand experience in this way. So experience cannot already involve the exercise of conceptual capacities.

(b) We have mostly the same sensory capacities as other mammals (and as human infants before they have acquired the ability to speak or reason). Despite not being able to use concepts, they are nonetheless able to move about in the world, pursue goals, discriminate between things on the basis of their appearance, focus their attention on objects in their environment. In short, they are able to see how things are. So seeing how things are cannot already require conceptual capacities.

(c) The character of conceptual activity is very different from that of perceptual experience. In an experience of a rising wave, I am presented with an infinite array of sensible detail. What I see far outstrips my capacity to describe it. There is even much more than I can notice in any single moment, or ever. When I say what I'm seeing, I put words together in order to articulate this one aspect of my experience; but this aspect which I isolate lacks, thus isolated, that which makes experience special. What I can say is intimate to the mind in a way that what is given is not.

This is the epistemological thesis of dualism.

As McDowell argues, (a) is based on a restricted conception of nature; that is to say, of causal interaction. If we think of causal interactions as fully determined by the agent, on the model of bombardment, there is no room for such a thing as *receptivity*. But even outside the present topic that would be mistaken. Living things generally engage in a form of causal interaction which is best described not as a confrontation but as a collaboration between agent and patient. The patient is not merely subjected to an alien force. Aristotle describes this dynamic in terms of a

combination of change and preservation: a change is affected in the patient, but this change is the actualisation of a potential and so in that sense something remains the same: what was already there in capacity (*dunamis*) comes to be there in activity (*energeia*) (Aristotle, *De Anima* II.5). As an illustration of this idea, I found the following passage by Michael Thompson very helpful, which is given in the context of an investigation into the concept of life (Thompson 2008: 40-1):

> [T]he effect of *the hydrogen bomb* on a rose, and on a roadbed, will be pretty much the same—at least if they are both at ground zero. I mean not only that the effects will be similar, but also that the type of causality will be the same. It is in a more restricted range of cases that we seem to see a difference, if the affected individual is an organism. I mean: sunlight makes the asphalt warm; moisture and cold make it crack; the H-bomb turns it to a vapor. These things are all on a level. The asphalt is in a sense passive in the face of any of them. But, in the familiar metaphors, the rose or maple is ready for certain of these 'influences'—rising spring temperatures, for example—it is already on to them, it takes advantage of them. Green leaves are not *subjected* to the light, if it is not too strong; they are not in the same sense passive in respect of it; the access of photons is not to be understood on a model of bombardment—that is, as it would have to be if we were discussing the fading of a book cover or the warming of a stone. This, I think, is the contrast one is trying to register, in placing 'responsiveness to stimuli' among the characteristic marks of the concept *life*.

Thompson is describing causal interactions involving living things. It is characteristic of such interactions that the patient exercises a passive power. (Beere 2010) One could admit this much and still resist the idea that causal interaction can involve conceptual capacities. But this

second idea is just a version of the first, as it comes to expression in the study of what it is to be a thinking animal. *We* are also responsive to stimuli, though our responsiveness is of a different kind than that of other animals. (Boyle 2012) As leaves are ready for sunlight, and as our ears are ready for sounds within a certain range of frequency and loudness, so we, but in a higher register, are ready for the familiar forms of unity which we find around us, such as the unity of a chord or melody, the unity of a sentence, or the unity of an animal and its movements. Our capacities for grasping such forms are, I have argued, already exercised in sensibility itself. A musician does not first hear notes and then come to hear them with understanding, as hanging together in the ways that they do. The understanding is already at work in hearing itself.

It may be a bit of a stretch to call such a capacity *conceptual*. After all, words don't really enter into it. If we think of a conceptual capacity as essentially a capacity for using a word, it may seem implausible - a form of intellectualism - to claim that conceptual capacities are already at work in sensibility. But we do not have to think of a conceptual capacity in that way. All that is needed for monism is that seeing things is a matter of apprehending, in sensibility, that the things one sees are ways for things to be. A capacity for hearing a perfect fifth as such is, in this sense, a conceptual capacity: it is a capacity for apprehending that a certain musical interval is this way for a musical interval to be: a perfect fifth. By apprehending this in experience one is in a position to put this into words. Even without knowing the words “perfect fifth” one is in a position to refer to what one hears demonstratively, in a way that relies on the structure of the experience. So there is an intimate relation

between words and understanding, but the discursive exercise of a conceptual capacity does not need to be prior to its exercise in perceptual experience.

(b) It is true that many animals see how things are in a sense. But that does not mean that they see how things are in the sense that we do; the sense relevant to an account of experience as providing reasons for what we are to think and do. A dog can hear spoken words, cock his head when you ask him a question, and respond to various commands. But he does not distinguish between subject and predicate, or grasp their unity in a predicative sentence. It seems to me that the dog is not aware of all that we are, and even what dog and human are both aware of, they are not aware of in the same way. The dog's sensibility is informed by understanding too, in a sense. But when it comes to the sort of things that we are interested in hearing (admittedly an unfair comparison), the dog's hearing stands to ours as the hearing of a tone-deaf person stands to the hearing of a musician. In a certain sense, the tone-deaf person and the musician receive the same input. But that again is not to say that the musician hears what the tone-deaf person hears, and performs another act in addition: combining what he hears in the light of his understanding. There is only the first act, which is already informed by understanding. Moreover, it would be mistaken to presume that what is really *there* is only what the tone-deaf person and the musician both hear. The harmony and melody which the musician hears is really there — you just need to have the right capacity to hear it.

(c) That doesn't mean there can't be differences in character between experience and other exercises of understanding. In a discursive judge-

ment, I put words together in order to say how things are. This is a different kind of activity than that of an experience, where what is around me impresses itself on my senses and thus determines which conceptual capacities I exercise. This difference accounts for the great contrast in character between discursive activity and perceptual experience. But this contrast does not mean that when I think in words, "It is raining," and when I see that it is raining, two different conceptual forms are in play. These are two different ways for the same conceptual form to be enmattered. The same judgement is made in both cases: It is raining. It is a consequence of the perfection of reality - "perfection" in the original sense of "completely made" - that in experience such judgements cannot come in isolation.[12] To see how things are is to see *the* way things are, in their infinite concrete particularity. That is easily construed as seeing something else than that things are thus and so. But the whole is not independent of its parts. I cannot see *the* way things are other than by seeing that elements of the world are ways for such things to be. (See chapter III.)

Third objection

I will grant you that human sensibility is informed by understanding, and so is not passive in the way that receiving a blow to the head is passive. Nonetheless, it is not active in the way that judgement is. For things to be present to me is not for me to *do* anything; it is not an exercise of rational *agency*. In experience my senses, informed by my understanding, present me with how things are; in response I make up my mind about what to think. It must be this way because experience must provide an external constraint to reason.

12 "By reality and perfection I understand the same." (Spinoza, Ethics II.*Def.*6)

This is, so to say, the most monistic that the epistemological thesis of dualism can get within a Fregean framework. It corrects for the dualistic separation of sensibility and understanding, but retains the separation of understanding and judgement (the will). If experience is to be self-conscious awareness of how things are, we must reject this separation as well.

The conviction that receptivity must be passive is what really deserves the name "the Myth of the Given." Whenever I make a contribution to my experience, so the conviction goes, this cannot be a matter of receptivity, of awareness of what is there before my eyes and around me—it must instead be adding something to what is given, interpreting it, giving a name to it, carving it up, bringing it under a concept, attaching a force, or whatever shape the idea may take. Under that assumption, experience cannot be simply seeing that something is the case, or at least it cannot be that in so far as it is receptive. McDowell points the way out of this predicament, but he stops short before the destination. His core insight can be put as follows. The subject can make a contribution to experience which is receptive. In experience I am not merely subjected to sensory impingement. The emphasis is on "merely": in a sense I am undergoing sensory impingement – experience is a transaction in nature – but this impingement should not be conceived on the model of bombardment. Rather, I am in various ways ready for the forms of unity which I find around me, as a catcher is ready for the ball flying into his mitt.

But the metaphor of readiness only gets us so far. In an experience I am not waiting around for the world to come to me; the experience is the meeting itself. For experience to be knowledge, it must be active. Note

that outside of philosophy we normally speak of experience in the active voice, with the perceiving subject in the grammatical subject position: I see... . The exception is when there is some reason to be suspicious - "My senses tell me …, but I cannot believe them." -, when we are in some way alienated from our senses or the world around us. Normally, when our capacities are working as they should, we simply see how things are. The subject can make an active contribution to experience which is nonetheless receptive. Instead of the metaphor of being given something, it may be better to speak of taking. But maybe the original metaphor will still do. After all, in the sense of passivity indicated by the passive mood, the catcher is not really any more passive than the pitcher, even when he holds his hands still in the act. If someone distracts the catcher, then he is being distracted (suffering), but as long as all goes well, he is the one who is doing the catching. Receiving is something one does.

McDowell might object that receptivity must be passive in order to put an external constraint on my thinking, and in that way satisfy the craving "for a limit to freedom" which underlies the Myth of the Given (McDowell 1994: 10). But what is reason when it stands in need of an *external* constraint? The underlying idea is that reason is, in itself, free activity, which would be irresponsible if it were not constrained from outside. McDowell contrasts experience with "deciding what to say about something." (McDowell 1994: 10) But although keeping up one's end in a conversation may be said to be free in that sense, judgement - taking something to be so - is not a matter of choice. We are not responsible for it in the way that we are responsible for our choices. In the moment when we think judgement stands in need of an external

constraint, what we have in mind is not judgement, and it does not then become judgement when we build a fence around it. What we need is not a limit *to* freedom, as if freedom were in itself anarchy, but a limit which *is* freedom, and so not a limitation. That is the genuinely Kantian idea which cannot find a place within the Cartesian framework of *Mind and World*. What is right in the idea of "external constraint" is just that experience must be immediately receptive. Or in other words, what is right is that my experience is the way it is because of how the things I experience are — and this my view accommodates.

Given how easily this is accommodated, it may seem that something else underlies McDowell's need for external constraint. Although he defends it by an appeal to the Kantian problem of the contentfulness of thought, and plays down the importance of the Cartesian problems of knowledge and illusion ("It does not matter much that one can be misled." (9)), when it comes to filling in the distance between passive experience and active judgement all McDowell has to offer is the need for accepting an appearance at face value or rejecting it as an illusion.[13] So it may seem that this, the fourth objection, is what motivates him:

Fourth objection

On your view, to be under an appearance that things are a certain way is normally already to take things to be that way. But sometimes we have reason to suspend judgement. We then decide, on the basis of our experience, whether or not to take it at face value. Therefore, to be under an appearance that things are a certain way is not the same as taking it to be so.

Although something like this argument may seem to underlie McDow-

13 I am alluding to the distinction made in Conant 2014.

ell's account in *Mind and World*, he himself shows us how to resist it. On this argument, "being under an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so" figures as a "highest common factor" (McDowell 1998: 390) between a good and a defective case. Say that the good case is one in which I am seeing that the sky is blue, and the defective case is one in which I have reason to distrust my recently acquired contact lenses. What makes the second case defective is not necessarily that I am under an illusion, but just that I have reason to suspect that I might be. This allows me to hold an appearance at arm's length and decide whether or not to take it at face value a something I normally cannot begin to do. Say that there is nothing wrong with my contact lenses, and what I am seeing is in fact the way it appears to me. In a sense I am seeing a blue sky. But unlike in the good case, I do not know that I am seeing a blue sky in and in virtue of doing so: my knowing this is conditional upon my assuring myself that there is nothing wrong with my contact lenses. And so in the relevant sense, the blue of the sky is not present to me – it is not self-consciously present to me. This is McDowell's view in his Aquinas lecture (McDowell 2011); my example is a variant of the one given there. What the present considerations show is that this view is incompatible with the Fregeanism of *Mind and World*.[14]

14 This is especially clear in a response by McDowell, given after writing Mind and World but still defending the same view, about an analogous case: "Her having her visual impression was her seeing that the tie was green, and it was not itself a matter of accepting, in any way, that the tie was green." (McDowell 2002: 278) That is just what the Aquinas lecture denies. In a situation where she has reason to distrust her experience, the act of seeing is separate from the act of recognising what she is seeing, so the green of the tie is not self-consciously present to her: "We should not conclude … that the thing's green-

One falls for the argument from illusion when one thinks that the sense in which the blue of the sky is present to me in the defective case is just the same as the sense in which it is present to me in the good case. But it is not the same. The defective case is necessarily an exception. I am able to assure myself that I am really seeing a blue sky only against a background of generally successful exercises of my capacity for knowledge. It could not be that I would generally hold appearances at arm's length and only decide in response whether or not to take them at face value.

Conclusions

It is true that our surroundings consist of such things as leaves and their rustling, things which we can only speak or think about. But thinking answers to *how* things are. When we speak about things, we do not speak about how things are. When we speak about things, we *say* how things are; more specifically, that things are thus and so. (We say, state, what is the case – a fact.) We can think of something that it is some way, and when we think truly, the very thing we think of is the very way we think it is.

This is not to draw a relation between something which can be before

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ness is visually present to her in the relevant sense. As I said, a perceptual state in which a feature of the environment is present to a subject, in the relevant sense, would have to be a non-defective exercise of a self-consciously possessed and exercised capacity to get into perceptual states that put the subject in a position to know, through perception, that things are the relevant way in the environment. And that is not how it is with the subject's perceptual state in the case we are considering." (McDowell 2011: 47-8)

our eyes and something which cannot be before our eyes. First of all, it is not a relation, but rather the unity which is thought in thinking of something that it is some way. Second, what is thus combined can itself be present in experience. In perceptual experience concrete particulars indeed impress themselves on our senses and are in that way present to us. But just as things are not separated from how they are, so seeing things is not separated from seeing how things are. For things to be present to us *is* for us to see how they are: for instance how they are spatio-temporally arranged, shaped and coloured, and - in the case of animals - what they are doing. “Seeing that the wave is rising” can be genuinely a receptive achievement, a matter of awareness of what is there before our eyes. What our words make manifest we can, in perceptual experience, find enmattered in the here and now.

II The Thing that is Thought

§1 Introduction

All that the intellect does is enable me to perceive the ideas which are subjects for possible judgements; and when regarded strictly in this light, it turns out to contain no error in the proper sense of the term.

[T]he will simply consists in our ability to do or not do something (to affirm or deny, to pursue or avoid); or rather, it consists simply in the fact that when the intellect puts something forward, we are moved to affirm or deny or to pursue or affirm it in such a way that we do not feel ourselves to be determined by any external force.

So what then is the source of my mistakes? It must be simply this: the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters which I do not understand.

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* IV: 39-40

Descartes, in the course of giving his answer to the problem of error[15], offers a conception of spontaneity (free will, judgement) and receptivity (perception, understanding), both deeply problematic and surprisingly attractive. My aim in this chapter is to bring the problem to the surface and to suggest an alternative. Let me describe the target which I have in mind as follows.

15 This could be seen as a form of the problem of evil: if I am created by an omnipotent and benevolent God, why do I sometimes err? I won't have anything to say on this aspect of the passage.

Judgement really consists of two moments: perceiving a thinkable content, and thinking of it that it is true. The first moment is different each time in so far as the perceived content is different each time; the second moment is always the same. A thinkable content is essentially what is given in the first moment. It is given, perceived not conceived, and thus independent of the activity of thought. As such it lacks that which is added to it in the second moment: acknowledgement of its truth. Thinkable contents do not have affirmation or denial internal to them. To combine subject and predicate is not, as such, to make a judgement; it is only to form a thinkable content. To make a judgement is to combine the thinkable content again with something else: to think is to think of a thinkable content that it is true, that this is how things are, that the world is accordingly, etc.

We can also state the same doctrine as a thesis on judging manifestly in spoken or written words: assertion. The idea is then as follows. When we say how things are, what is said is, in itself, essentially something to mention, not to assert. We can refer to it by means of a 'that' clause ("that things are thus and so") or a nominalisation of an indicative sentence ("things' being thus and so"). Although when we make an assertion we only have to write or say a combination of name and verb, which expresses a thinkable content, what we are really doing is saying of the thinkable content that it is true, or something equivalent to that: that things *are* thus and so, that the world satisfies things' being thus and so, etc. So to assert that something is the case is not merely a matter of combining subject and predicate. It would be logically perspicuous to indicate this by adding something like an assertion sign: to write the assertion sign is to assert what follows it. As a ques-

tion is a combination of proposition and question mark, so an assertion is a combination of proposition and assertion sign.

Maybe I am stating the view more bluntly and naïvely than a proponent would. My interest is not so much in finding the most defensible version as in seeing the deep problem at the core of a certain way of thinking about thinking. What tends to happen instead is that symptoms are rejected while the problematic framework is allowed to remain in place. The Cartesian may acknowledge that if combining subject and predicate is not yet making a judgement, we cannot think of judging as a matter of combining the combination of subject and predicate with something else; if predication is generally without assertoric force, this also holds for predicating "is true" of a thinkable content, or anything else which is supposed to play the same role. So Gottlob Frege, for example, writes that we declare the recognition of a truth in an indicative sentence (Frege 1918: 294):

> We do not have to use the word 'true' for this. And even when we do use it the real assertoric force lies not in it but in the form of the indicative sentence and where this loses its assertoric force the word 'true' cannot put it back again.

That is, I believe, exactly right. An assertion is made by manifestly combining name and verb in an indicative sentence, not by combining the combination of name and verb with 'is true' or anything like that. And although this combination can, in a sense, "lose its assertoric force" - that is, occur unasserted -, that does not mean that in itself it lacks assertoric force. But I will argue that this insight can only find its place when we reject the Cartesian view which makes it seem that the

assertoric force does lie in some kind of addition to the thinkable content.

§2 A sign for the angels

1 Though the doctrine is widespread, the defence which is the most relevant to the present topic is to be found in the work of Frege. It is introduced near the beginning of *Begriffsschrift* and remains central to his view throughout. Let me start with the view as it is introduced in the late essay "Der Gedanke."

There Frege draws a distinction between three acts (Frege 1918: 294):

(1) The apprehension of a thought – thinking;

(2) the acknowledgement of the truth a thought – judgement;

(3) the manifestation of this judgement – assertion;

What Frege calls *thinking* is really grasping a thought without taking a stance on its truth; it may be less misleadingly called *entertaining a thought*. It is in essence the same moment as that described by Descartes as the mere perception of an idea. Making a judgement is, first, having a thought in mind and, moreover, holding it to be true. Frege compares this to asking a yes-no question, and answering it with yes or no. Grasping the thought is like asking oneself a yes-no question; holding a thought true is like answering it affirmatively. Making an assertion is performing another act in addition: making one's judgement manifest in spoken or written words.

Although the distinction is drawn in terms of acts, it is characteristic of Frege to postulate various items corresponding to these acts; in this case: a thought, an assertoric force, an indicative sentence and the judgement stroke. Before discussing what these are, let me use them as placeholders in an an overview of the doctrine. Schematically speaking, thinking is having a thought in mind; judging is holding a thought together with assertoric force; and asserting is making the combination of thought and assertoric force manifest by means of a combination of sentence and judgement stroke. At least it would be that way in a logically perfect language, one that lays bare the structure of pure thought, as Frege's *Begriffsschift* is supposed to do. In everyday discourse we normally need only to say or write a sentence in indicative form, and a convention[16] will allow the hearer or reader to know when we mean it assertorically.

A thought is that which can be true or false: "Without meaning to give a definition, I call a thought that for which the question of truth even so much as arises." (Frege 1918: 292) I take it that this is not a definition because it does not live up to Frege's stringent standards for definitions. It does seem a definition in the looser sense that it tells us how Frege uses the word "thought": if something can be true or false, it is thereby (*per definition*) a thought in Frege's sense; or maybe more precisely, a thought is to be that which determines a question of truth, so that it depends only on how things are whether the thought is true or false. Frege thinks this already excludes everything visible or audible, or generally perceptible by the senses, from the realm of things for

16 At least that is the interpretation both of Geach (1965) and of Dummett (1973). Frege may not be committed to its being a convention.

which truth can come into question. “Is a picture, then, as a mere visible or tangible thing, really true, and a stone, a leaf, not true?” (290) We can take something visible to represent things as being some way, but then it is not merely the visible thing as such, but also out interpretation, which determines the question of truth. A picture does not represent unless “an intention comes with it (*dabei wäre*).” (290) When an intention does come with it, the combination is more transparently expressed in the form of a sentence.

But a thought also cannot be a sentence. Frege does sometimes indicate that there is an intimate connection between a thought and a sentence. The internal structure of the thought mirrors the structure of a sentence which expresses it transparently. (Frege, 1984: 390) But it is also important to Frege that there is no unique way of doing so. One and the same sentence can, depending on the context, be used to express different thoughts, and one and the same thought can be expressed by means of structurally different sentences. The same idea can be approached in terms of analysis and the context principle. Frege writes that he does not start with concepts and builds thoughts by means of them; rather, he starts with the whole thought, and gets to the parts by means of analysis. (Frege, PW: 16, 253) Since any one thought can be analysed in many ways, just as it can be expressed in many ways, some Fregeans (Bell 1996, Travis 2008, Kemmerling 2010) conclude that in itself the thought must be a structureless whole. A thought would be distanced from its apprehension or assertion in words. It is difficult to see how, on this view, one can *express* a thought in words: it would seem words stand in between the thinking subject and the thought. But Frege does sometimes suggest that language is merely a material means of

presenting thoughts to ourselves and others in visible or audible form, not internal to what the thought is in itself. In itself, the thought is something non-sensible (*Unsinnlich*). "One communicates a thought. How does this happen? One brings about changes in the common outside world which, perceived by another person, are supposed to induce him to apprehend the thought and take it to be true." (Frege 1918: 310) This is another instance, besides the one that will take centre stage, of a distinction between the thought as it is in itself and the thought as it is thought (as a discursive act).[17]

What will take centre stage is the following. Going by the idea that a thought determines a question of truth, one might still think that a thought is the same as a judgement. When I judge that it is raining, it depends only on how things are, on whether it is raining, whether my judgement is true. But Frege observes that one can grasp a thought without judging it to be true. One way of doing so is by asking a question. When I ask whether it is raining, I employ the same form of words, which express the same thought, as when I say (assert) that it is raining. But only in the latter case do I commit myself to the truth of this thought. The assertion "contains something more" than the thought (Frege 1918: 294), just as the corresponding question contains something more: we might call these "assertoric force" and "inquisitive force" respectively. But Frege observes that in an indicative sentence, thought and assertoric force are so closely entwined as to be hardly distinguishable. They are indeed. Frege wants to distinguish what I say,

17 I believe this view must be resisted, and so it may not be the most charitable interpration of Frege. It is nonetheless one strand of his thinking. For an alternative interpretation, see Dummett 1973, 1991, and Sullivan 2004.

mean, in saying that it is raining, that it *is* raining, from the thing that I say: that it is raining (try to hear the copula without force).

Since the same form of words is used in both cases, this provides an additional motivation for separating off the sentence as a third element: the sentence expresses the thought, but does not express the assertoric force. But then again, it does: "the real assertoric force lies … in the form of the indicative sentence" — that is what it is for expression of content and expression of force to be so closely entwined. Let me quote the conclusion of a posthumously published piece, "My Basic Logical Insights", in which the tension comes to expression (Frege, PW: 252):

> Now the thing that most clearly indicates the essence of logic is the assertoric force with which a sentence is uttered. But no word, or part of a sentence, corresponds to this; the same series of words may be uttered with assertoric force at one time, and not at another. In language assertoric force is bound up with the predicate.

No word corresponds to the assertoric force, but in language assertoric force is bound up with the predicate. Whatever wriggle room the change in formulation gives, this is illusory: Frege may as well have written that no word expresses assertoric force, but in an indicative sentence the verb does. His view, I believe, is that in a language which is material, as human language unfortunately is, we express assertoric force by means of the verb. But the same word can be used without assertoric force, as is inevitable for a mere sign. After all, signs by themselves do not represent, but only when an intention comes with it. Logic is a struggle to free the human spirit from the dominion of the

materiality of language. In a logically perfect language, which only angels could speak, assertoric force would be expressed by a sign that isn't a material sign: one that is pure intention. We will be occupied with this difficulty for much of the present chapter.

Asking a question is only one way of employing a thought without committing oneself to its truth. Other cases are asserting a conditional (one does not commit oneself to the truth of the antecedent, and only conditionally to the truth of the consequent), indirect speech, and merely entertaining a thought. Frege also contrasts assertion with making as if to assert, for instance when saying something on stage in the context of a play. If the latter were an important motivation for Frege, his argument would be a straightforward application of the argument from illusion. The idea would be that we should understand assertion as whatever assertion and mock assertion have in common, plus something. The thinkable content then becomes the "highest common factor" of these two acts: something which is in itself not meant. In order to mean it, we have to add something to it, for instance the words, "I really mean it." But of course these words can again be said "without the requisite seriousness," and the situation is hopeless. *That* Frege clearly realises, but he does not draw the conclusion that assertion and mock assertion are just not on a par. It would make more sense to understand mock assertion as a degenerate case of assertion. Let me use Frege's own comparison of an assertion on stage with stage thunder. It is as if he thinks thunder is whatever thunder and stage thunder have in common, plus reality. But we can only make sense of stage thunder as an attempt to imitate thunder. We can know what thunder is without having any conception of stage thunder, but not the

other way around. Just so, our understanding of what assertion is is prior to our understanding of what it is to make as if to assert.

Although Frege mentions it often, mock assertion is not the most important contrasting case. The case of merely entertaining a thought, which Frege suggestively calls "thinking", is much more central. We may think of merely entertaining a thought as asking oneself a question. One should be able to ask the question without knowing the answer. So there must be a neutral form of awareness of a thought which does not already involve taking a stance. This neutral form of awareness is the same, I believe, as what Descartes meant by perceiving ideas, which for Descartes explains the possibility of making mistakes. I make mistakes because "the scope of the will is wider than that of the intellect; but instead of restricting it within the same limits, I extend its use to matters which I do not understand." (Descartes 1641: 40) Just this underlies Frege's doctrine as well, a conception of the intellect (understanding) as a faculty of perceiving - merely entertaining – ideas, separate from the will, understood as the capacity for judgement. It is only in judgement that we expose ourselves to risk of error. (Cf. Frege 1918: 306)

More broadly speaking, Frege wants to safeguard logic from all that is merely subjective, changeable, and material. The three-fold distinction allows him to do that. It separates off what belongs to the order of *being true* from what belongs to the order of *holding true*. In logic we study the laws of truth. We are not concerned with how human beings happen to think, but how they should think in order to reach the aim of thought: truth. Moreover, logic is not concerned with the way people should think in this or that area of human inquiry. It is only concerned with

truth as such. So the logician does not study human bodies or human minds, but what Frege calls "the mind". And logic is not about the human activity of thinking, which as such is just one more phenomenon in nature; it has to be about the things which, in that activity, we endorse or reject. This requires separating off those things both from the activity of thinking, and so from the force used in asserting them, and from the material means we use to present thoughts to others and ourselves. It may not itself provide an argument, but it explains why Frege feels the need to argue in this direction.

2 Frege says that an assertion "contains something more than the thought", and calls this assertoric force. But what does an assertion contain in addition to the thought? What is assertoric force?

Speaking of containing may be misleading here. The *content* of the assertion is the thinkable content. If the assertoric force is also *contained* in the assertion, it sounds like it is part of the content. Just that is commonly said to be a mistaken way of understanding what Frege meant his judgement stroke to be. In his concept script - both as it is introduced in *Begriffsschrift* and under later revisions - the judgement stroke does the work of indicating assertoric force.[18] This, everyone

18 Let me quote one of the passages in which he introduces this sign. To write an equation, Frege writes, only gives us "expressions for truth values (*Ausdrucke von Wahrheitsweten*), without that thereby anything is judged (*behauptet*). This separation of the act from the subject matter of judgement seems to be indispensable; for otherwise we could not express a mere supposition [*bloße Annahme*] - the putting of a case without a simultaneous judgement as to its arising or not. We thus need a special sign in order to be able to assert some-

knows, should not be understood as a contribution to the content. Whereas the content is semantic, the judgement stroke indicates force; whereas the content can be analysed in terms of functions and arguments, and so both expresses and refers, the judgement stroke is the only sign in Frege's system which does neither. The reason is that the judgement stroke does not *say* of what follows it that it is asserted: it *actually asserts it*. "⊢2+3=5 does not designate anything; it asserts something." (Frege 1891: 22fn)

Critics have sometimes taken this to mean that the judgement stroke asserts something in the same way that a person does. A sign cannot do such a thing, as for example both Wittgenstein and Davidson observe. But it seems we are in accord with Frege's use of the judgement stroke when we say that *writing* it is to assert what follows. Which means that

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thing." (Frege 1891: 21-2)

Frege recognises, of course, that this is a reversal of the ordinary state of things. Just before this remark he writes that an equation is normally understood as an expression of the corresponding judgement. In everyday discourse, which includes mathematical discourse, we do not need a special sign to assert something, and we can still express a mere supposition — by saying that it is a mere supposition. But now it looks as if a supposition has the form, "Suppose that p" whereas a judgement has the form "p", whereas Frege thinks it is the other way around: a supposition has the form "p" and a judgement the form "⊢p". This reflects Frege's belief that a proposition only expresses a mere supposition. To assert it is to add something to it, but to put it forward as a mere supposition is not to add something to it: it is to put it forward as the thing that it is. One recognises in this the Cartesian view: the content of a judgement is given in an act of passive apprehension; in a judgement we do something with it.

the judgement stroke asserts a thinkable content under the same aspect of the verb as that used in, “A key opens a lock,” or indeed, “The sentence 'The sky is blue' says that the sky is blue.” To turn the key is to open the lock, to say the sentence is to say that the sky is blue, and to write the judgement stroke in front of a proposition is to assert that proposition.[19] The judgement stroke says, under this aspect, what follows; it does not say *of* what follows that it is asserted. (But doesn't “The sky is blue” already say, under this aspect, that the sky is blue? But how could the judgement stroke assert something in any stronger sense? Surely one still needs to write it in order to use it to make an assertion.)

So we cannot replace the judgement stroke by something like, “I affirm: p.” I would think of such a device as follows. To say “I affirm: p” is to announce what one is going to do (affirming that p) and then to do it. The announcement makes something explicit which is internal to the act announced: it is internal to affirming that p that one thereby knows oneself to be doing so (affirmation is a self-conscious act). So there is certainly something special about “I affirm,” but what is special about it is not that it cannot be paraphrased; it can: the speaker affirmed that p. The judgement stroke thus understood would have a semantic role, even if it is one of making explicit what is already internal to the act announced. A more perspicuous representation of assertoric force would be to replace the judgement stroke by the convention to drop one's voice at the end of an assertion. When one paraphrases a question one does not mimic the concluding rising voice; just so, lowering one's voice would always pertain to the speaker's assertion, not to whatever

19 I am ignoring, for now, the horizontal sign.

assertion the speaker may be paraphrasing. Such a convention is imaginable, and if the judgement stroke meant only that, it could hardly be philosophically problematic. Though we should also think about the fact that in ordinary discourse we have no need for this convention.

Now Frege does in fact use a sign, something which *looks* paraphrasable even if we are told that we should not. (That is what I mean with it being a sign for the angels. It would be better if it had no look.) And although it may be a misunderstanding to think of this sign as making a contribution to the content, this is not, I believe, the reader's misunderstanding. It is forced upon the reader in the attempt to make sense of Frege's doctrine. The problem is that Frege thinks of what follows the judgement stroke as essentially something which takes the place of a name in a predicative proposition, or of a thing in a predicative fact; rather than essentially a combination of name and verb.[20] On his later view, for example, what follows the judgement stroke is the name of a truth value.[21] The judgement stroke asserts of this name that it names the True. But that means it does two things: it turns the name of a truth value into the claim that it names the True, and then it commits the speaker to this claim (all this under the aspect of the verb explained above). The first thing it does is, unlike the second, paraphrasable. This

20 By itself, a thought is a name for its truth value. In an intensional context such as “I think that p” the words “that p” refer to a thought, and so here it takes the place of a thing in a relational fact (I – think – that p).

21 The judgement stroke is followed by “the horizontal”, itself followed by any concept. The horizontal turns, so to say, whatever follows into the name for a truth value: either the name it already is, if it already is the name for a truth value, or else a name for the False.

part of what the judgement stroke does is replaceable by something like '___ is true'. By affixing 'is true' to the name of a proposition, we get that proposition again: we get something a speaker could commit herself to.

We find the same idea in Frege's early work. There the judgement stroke is supposed to precede a proposition, which it asserts.[22] Without the judgement stroke, we are left with a sentence that refers to (*bedeutet*) a thinkable content, which we can refer to as "the proposition that," or "the circumstance that." (Frege, 1879: 2) A thinkable content, thus conceived, is the name of a circumstance, and so not the sort of thing one can think. To think it, assert it, is to transform it into the claim that the circumstance obtains. That is why Frege characterises the judgement stroke as a predicate: it predicates "is a fact" of the thinkable content. Since it thus becomes the main verb of every judgement, Frege describes it as "the common predicate of all judgements." (ibid.: 4)

That remark is generally treated as an aberration. After all, Frege also says explicitly that predication cannot be assertion. Moreover, the doctrine that a thought is a name for a truth value is often treated as a peculiarity of Frege's thinking, which we can reject while retaining what is central to his thought.[23] But these are not aberrations. They are forms

22 The proposition, in its turn, consists of the horizontal stroke followed by a sentence. The horizontal stroke is supposed to "transform" the sentence into a unity (apparently the sentence is not already a unity).

23 Even among those contemporary philosophers self-consciously following in Frege's footsteps, very few endorse either the view that a thought is the name of a truth value, or the use of Frege's judgement stroke. But the ways in which these are usually rejected retains the source of the paradox, and, moreover,

which the most central element of his thinking can take, and the problem is really this Cartesian view, no matter the details. According to that view, the content of a judgement is given. To think it is to do more than merely have it in mind; it is to think that this is how things are, that the world is accordingly, or something synonymous – in short, to think *that p* is to think of *that p* that it is true. But then *that p* is not the whole of what we think. We do not only think *it*; we think *of* it that it is true. But now the thinkable content is construed as a name or nameable of which truth is predicated. This name or nameable is not yet the claim that it says how things are, and so it is not yet something a

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does away with something deeply right in Frege's approach to logic.

Although the content of a judgement or assertion is not taken to be the name of a truth value, it is still taken to be a thinkaboutable, which in judgement we relate to the world. We find this idea in Travis's view that a thought is a zero-place concept, or in McDowell's use of "that things are thus and so" as a referring expression.

And although contemporary logic does without the judgement stroke, this is because it deals with mere unasserted propositions and the logical relations between them. It retains the idea that a proposition is, as such, without assertoric force, but disagrees with Frege that we need anything more for logic. But Frege had a good reason for thinking that we need more. If the premises of a syllogism are unasserted, the conclusion is implicitly conditional. It should really read: if the premisses are true, then this conclusion is true. But the point of a syllogism is that you can eliminate the premisses, retaining only the conclusion.

There seems to me something deeply right in this idea. But what is at issue is the assumption shared between Frege and the recent tradition, that without the judgement stroke what we would have are mere forceless thinkables.

speaker can commit herself to. It is just part of the Cartesian view that in the second moment, that of judgement, the speaker both needs to transform the content into a claim and commit herself to it.

So it may seem clear that these two tasks of the judgement stroke must be distinguished. Maybe we should give the first task to "the horizontal sign", which accompanies the judgement stroke. The horizontal doesn't have much to do anyway: on the early view, it is redundant if propositions are already unities, which they are, and on the later view it is redundant as long as we only write the horizontal in front of full propositions. So say that the horizontal transforms the name of a truth value (circumstance) into the claim that this name names the True (that the circumstance obtains). Now the judgement stroke can be genuinely a force indicator, unparaphrasable, committing the writer to this claim. Are we out of the woods? No. What would, on present assumptions, be the content of an assertion? It would be the claim that the name which follows the horizontal names the True. But this, *that it names the True*, is, on Frege's view, the name for a truth value. It still needs to be transformed into something assertible - the claim that it names the True - in order to be asserted. So the transformation of name to claim cannot be effected before the assertion. The content of an assertion can only be a name, which forces us to think of assertion as saying of the name that it names the True. It is in making a claim that a name is made into a claim.

This is why Frege speaks of assertion as a matter of saying of a thought that it is the True, rather than simply saying the thought. "Thus here we are not just writing down a truth value … but also at the same time saying that it is the True." (Frege 1891: 22) It is also why commentators

find it irresistible to write something like "Merely to have a thought - in the sense of grasping it and fixing one's attention on it - is different from judging *that* that thought is true… ." (Dummett 1971: 298) It is significant that Dummett feels the need to write "that __ is true" around the thought. The act of judgement cannot be merely a matter of thinking a thought; it must be thinking of a thought that it is true. The same can be said of assertion. The judgement stroke does not, after all, say what follows; it says *of* what follows that it is asserted. Nonetheless, unlike, on the Fregean view, ordinary saying of something that it is asserted, this would simultaneously be actually a matter of assertion, of committing the speaker to this claim.[24] But that is really incoherent, as can be shown in the following two ways.

(1) The reason the judgement stroke is needed in the first place is that predication was supposed to be without assertoric force (Frege, 1892: 35):

> Subject and predicate (understood in the logical sense) are just elements of thought; they stand on the same level for knowledge. By combining subject and predicate, one reaches only a thought, never passes from a sense to its reference, never from a thought to its truth value.

If now an exception is made for saying of a thought that it is true, why not make the exception immediately for saying of a thing that it is

24 Dummett puts it in this way: "We of course do not explain what this activity of assertion is by saying that it consists in *saying that* a certain truth-value – the truth-value of the thought expressed by the sentence – is truth; for the expression 'say that' is here used, not to mean 'utter a sentence expressing that,' but as a synonym of 'assert that'." (Dummett 1971: 298)

some way? That would be consistent with the view that assertoric force lies in the indicative form of a sentence and not in the words "is true". Also note that the suggestion that the judgement stroke "actually asserts" what follows meant only that it asserts what follows under the same aspect of the verb as that in which "The sky is blue" says that the sky is blue. But under that aspect "The sky is blue" already says that the sky is blue. To say "The sky is blue", in appropriate circumstances, is to say that the sky is blue; to write the judgement stroke in front of it, in appropriate circumstances, is still to say that the sky is blue. There is really nothing special for the judgement stroke to do.[25]

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25 This idea comes to expression in the Tractarian rejection of Frege's view:

> The verb of the proposition is not 'is true' or 'is false' – as Frege thought – but that which 'is true' must already contain the verb. (4.063)
>
> Every proposition must already have a sense; assertion cannot give it a sense, for what it asserts is just the sense itself. And the same hold for denial etc. (4.064)
>
> (Frege's assertion sign "⊢" is logically quite meaningless. In Frege (and in Russell) it only shows that these authors hold as true the propositions marked in this way. Thus "⊢" belongs to the proposition no more than does the number of the proposition. A proposition cannot possibly assert of itself that it is true.) (4.442)

Elizabeth Anscombe thought that these passages evince such a misunderstanding of Frege's view that they must have been written in response to Bertrand Russell's interpretation of Frege, and this has become a common criticism. On the surface, Frege does not believe that "is true" (and certainly not "is false") is the verb of the proposition; and the terminology used by Wittgenstein, such as "assertion sign" instsead of "judgement stroke", is Russell's. But if I am not mistaken in the above, then that is only on the surface, and Wittgenstein is deeply right about what Frege is really committed to. Because the assertion sign is tasked with turning a name into a claim, it takes over the

(2) If thinking *that p* is really thinking *that that p is true*, then the content of this act is not *that p* but *that that p is true*. But this is again only a name for a truth value; in fact, it is just the very same thought again. It still stands in need of transformation into something assertible. To think it is to think *that that that p is true*, and so on forever. We could never think anything, because we can never get to the point where what we think has the form of something that we can think. Of course, a Fregean would say that the content of the judgement is *that p*, not *that that p is true*. The words "content of the judgement" are interpreted to refer to this. That is said from the perspective of the theorist looking at what people say. If instead we direct the theorist at what he himself is saying when he speaks of "judging *that* that thought is true" he will have to conclude that what is judged is *that that thought is true* — and thus the regress begins.

On the Fregean view, there are really two standpoints one can take up: there is the standpoint one takes up in thinking that it is raining; and there is the standpoint which the Fregean takes up in saying what it is that one is then doing: predicating truth of the thought that is raining, naming the True, and so on. But this second standpoint is sideways-on. From this standpoint, it seems a thought is not the sort of thing one can

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work of the verb of the proposition, so that the verb comes to seem devoid of assertoric force. We are led to read the assertion sign as saying of a thought/proposition that it is true. But it is redundant if it says this under the same aspect as the aspect under which the verb "is blue" in "The sky is blue" says that the sky is blue ("The sky is blue" already says that the sky is blue), which is the point of the first two remarks; and it cannot say it under the aspect under which a person can say that the sky is blue, which is the point of the last remark.

think; it is only half a thought. One cannot think a grammatical subject; one can only predicate something of it. One cannot think a name; one can only think that the name names the True. And so on for every other attempt to say what the distance between a thought as it is in itself and a thought as it is judged (asserted) comes to. In short, one cannot think that it is raining; one can only think that it is true that it is raining. But now the problem repeats itself when we apply the theory to itself. If *that it is raining* is only half a thought, then *that it is true that it is raining* is still only half a thought.

This paradox, the source of which Wittgenstein already criticised in PI 22, lies behind the "paradoxical truism" of PI 95:

> "Thinking must be something peculiar (*Einzigartiges*)." When we say, *mean*, that such and such is the case then with what we mean we do not stop anywhere short of the fact, but mean that *such-and-such – is – so-and-so*. – But this paradox (which has the form of a truism) can also be expressed in this way: one can *think* what is not the case.

The first sentence is almost a direct quotation from Frege: "Judgement can be seen as the advance from a thought to its truth value. Of course this cannot be a definition. Judgement is something quite peculiar (*Eigenartiges*) and incomparable." (Frege, 1892: 35) All that is needed for the sense of paradox is that there seems to be some distance between when "such and such is the case" is said the first time, as merely something meant, and when it is said the second time, as *being* — as if something is achieved in that way. It is a paradox in the form of a truism, because the paradox is that a truism seems to say something substantial. We know that nothing is achieved: all that Wittgenstein

really says is, “When we say that something is so we say that something is so.” And yet we can recognise the ambition if we feel there is something to aim for. The reification of “what we mean,” - its being essentially something to mention, distinguished from what is claimed in asserting it - is just what makes it seem that there is something to aim for. With “what we mean” we stop nowhere short of the fact. “What we mean” = that such and such is so and so. But what we *mean* (claim) is that such and such - *is* - so and so. In the first instance the thought is mentioned, as a thing to refer to, whereas in the second case it is asserted. On Frege's view, there must be a difference between what is mentioned (a thought) and what is asserted (that the thought is true), but when we look again, we see that what is asserted is just what is mentioned.

§3 Monism

In a mind no volition—that is, no affirmation or negation—occurs except that which the idea involves just because it is an idea.

Corollary: the will and the intellect are one and the same.

Baruch Spinoza, Ethics II§49

1 Let me recap quickly. On the Cartesian view, a thinkable content is given in a moment of passive apprehension; in a judgement we do something with it. The thinkable content as such lacks what is added to it in the second moment. It has its proper place as a name in a predicative proposition, or as a thing in a predicative fact: it is a forceless

thinkable. To think the thinkable is to think of it that it is true. Two tasks are performed at once: turning a forceless thinkable into a claim, and making this claim (committing the author to it). They must be performed at once, because if we try to perform the first task first, the result is just a thinkable content again, which still stands in need of the same transformation. This, we saw, is incoherent: on this conception thinking that p is not thinking that p.

It may seem that the solution is to deny that there is a distinction between an act of judgement and the content of that act. What is judged is, of course, not a token act of judgement - my judging here and now that it is raining. But can't it still be the type of act I thus perform, and which someone else, somewhen and somewhere else, can perform as well: judging that it is raining? This seems an appropriate bearer of a truth value: an act of judgement determines, in Frege's sense, a question of truth. But Peter Geach (1965) and others have argued that such a view cannot accommodate the point - which Geach calls “Frege's point” - that a proposition may occur both asserted and unasserted. In the syllogism, “If p then q; but p, therefore q,” the two occurrences of p must mean the same. We have to distinguish between what is repeated here – the proposition p – and its being used first as an antecedent and then as an assertion. And that does seem to mean that what is repeated cannot be an act of judgement, not even a type act of judgement. If the proposition just were an act of judgement, it seems that to use the proposition would be to make this judgement. But to use a proposition is not always to make the corresponding judgement; it is not, for example, when the proposition is used as antecedent. Frege's point does show that we must distinguish between an act of judgement and

its content. I will use the words “thought” and “judgement” synonymously, and take the content to be a proposition: a sentence individuated by logical criteria, so that two sentences, as presently understood, are the same if and only if they are understood to mean the same. I will write a proposition between German quotation marks: » The sky is blue «.[26]

There may still be a very intimate connection between act and content. This would be so if a thinkable content is essentially something to think, rather than, as on the Fregean view, essentially something to refer to. We would have a resolution to the paradox when a proposition in indicative form is already a claim, not something that stands in need of transformation. And indeed it is truistic that it is already a claim, as Wittgenstein's paradoxical truism brings out. To think that the sky is blue is not to think that things are accordingly; it is to think that *the sky - is - blue*. As a key opens a lock, so » The sky is blue « says that the sky is blue. Under that aspect, the indicative mood expresses assertoric force. Since it is the predicate which is negated (to think that it is not the case that the sky is blue is to think that the sky is *not* blue), we may say that it carries assertoric force.

26 This corrects for the remaining side of Frege's three-fold separation between force, thought and sentence. I argue for this briefly in chapter III. This understanding of the notion of a proposition accords with Geach's, and with the Tractarian distinction between sign and symbol. On the Tractarian view, two visible or audible signs are the same symbol if they are used to mean the same: “In the proposition, ‘Green is green’—where the first word is the name of a person and the last an adjective—these words do not merely have different meanings: they are different symbols.” (TLP 3.323) A proposition is made up of - and is itself - a symbol.

But now Frege's point can easily distract us from this idea. It seems it prevents us from saying that to combine subject and predicate is to make a judgement, or that to manifestly combine name and verb is to make an assertion. To do so is only to make a thinkable content, which can still occur unasserted. It now seems that to judge is to do more than thinking, saying or writing the proposition. Even if there is a sense in which the verb expresses assertoric force, this is not assertoric force in the sense in which it is given to the proposition in the act of judgement. So when I think that the sky is blue, there is more in my mind than merely the proposition » The sky is blue «. In addition, there is the assertoric intention or force with which I say these words to myself. I may, so to say, imbue the verb with this intention, but it is still separable from the verb as such, since it can be used without this intention. The assertion sign is meant to be this intention purely; pure spirit without matter. (You can say, "I love you," without meaning it, but you cannot say the spirit without meaning it. The spirit is your meaning it.)

On the Fregean view, the assertoric force which is expressed by the verb cannot be the same as the assertoric force which is given to the proposition in the act of judgement. But in an act of judgement there is nothing else than the proposition. To paraphrase a remark of Wittgenstein, when I think in words, I don't have "forces" in my mind in addition to the verbal expressions; rather, language itself is the vehicle of judgement.[27] When a proposition is judged or asserted, the commitment of the thinker or speaker comes to expression in the proposition

27 This is the original: "When I think in words, I don't have 'meanings' in my mind in addition to the verbal expressions; rather, language itself is the vehicle of thought." (PI §329)

itself, not in anything added to it. To make a claim (assertion) is just to make a claim (predication).

So how can that be compatible with Frege's point? It is true that we can combine subject and predicate without thinking it. But that does not mean that to think, say or write a proposition is, by default, merely to put it forward for consideration, and when you want to assert it you have to do something else in addition. Things are just the other way around. To combine subject and predicate is, in an ordinary context, to think this combination unless one does something else in addition. By an ordinary context I mean one in which words are taken seriously, rather than, for example, the context of a play. And by doing something in addition I mean doing something that would cancel the assertoric force, such as adding a disjunct or a question mark. This can itself be seen as a matter of linguistic context. In the right context, all one needs to do is combine subject and predicate. To do so manifestly, in spoken or written words, is to make an assertion. We should not understand the absence of a force-cancelling context with the presence of a force indicator.

Frege puts assertion on a par with making as if to assert, with other speech acts, and with occurring as a clause (antecedent, disjunct, etc.) within a larger assertion. The judgement stroke is supposed to indicate a contrast with all types of cases. It is supposed to show that the author is really committed to the proposition that follows, that it is an assertion and not a command or some other speech act, and that it does not occur in some larger context (it is not an antecedent or disjunct, etc.). It is important to see that none of these contrasts require a special sign, and in some cases a special sign really ruins it. By seeing this, we see

that to distinguish the primary use of a proposition from these secondary uses is not an act in addition to combining name and verb.

(1) Most obviously futile, and a familiar target of criticism, is the attempt to use the assertion sign to draw a contrast with making as if to assert. If we had to use an assertion sign to express commitment, actors would have to use it on stage in order to give a convincing performance, as Geach and others observe. Or worse, if we had to say, "We really mean it," in order to mean something, we could never mean anything. This is not something special about assertion; it holds for saying stuff generally. When you ask a question you commit yourself to its presuppositions; when you issue an invitation you give the addressee the right to take it up; and even telling a story comes with a certain responsibility. In order to avoid such commitment you either need to say it in a special context, such as a play, or say something additional such as "I don't really mean it." But in order to commit to what you are saying you don't need to do anything special. And even when you don't commit yourself to that which is embedded in some such context, you are still responsible for the embedding. This larger context is occurring by itself. When I say, "I want to say: *Entweder Spinozismus oder keine Philosophie*," I distance myself from Hegel's claim, but commit myself, at least for the time being, to the claim that I want to agree with Hegel.

It is not a convention that by default we mean what we say. If it were, we should be able to imagine abolishing this convention and replacing it by the assertion sign. The assertion sign would indicate commitment, really meaning what one says. Its absence would naturally be taken to mean that what follows is merely put forward for consideration. So to say, "The sky is blue," would mean something like what,

“Suppose that the sky is blue,” means now. That it would mean that would be the default: it replaces the default assumption that we mean what we say. So whenever someone would say something, we would need to write this as follows: “…,” she supposed. But then how could anything be said? Even the new convention would just be understood as: “I say: the sky is blue,” she supposed. We would not be able to cancel this default understanding by a convention, just as, in our actual language, we can't cancel default saying by a convention. Even if we introduced the convention that everything we say between midnight and 3pm we don't really mean, then when we said something in those hours, we would mean that we don't mean it. So this idea comes to nothing. That by default we mean what we say is not a convention but belongs to what saying is.

It seems that Frege thought of forming a thinkable content as a tentative exercise, a means of testing for logical connections. The expression of the thinkable content “that opposite magnetic poles attract each other,” in absence of the assertion sign, “is to produce in the reader merely the idea of the mutual attraction of magnetic poles, say in order to derive consequences from it and to test by means of these whether the thought is correct.” (Frege 1879: 2) This remark does not describe Frege's conception of inference: to “derive consequences” is not to infer, because we cannot infer from false premises – that is just why Frege needs the judgement stroke in the representation of a syllogism. But it still tells us something about his conception of thinkable content. The idea is produced in the reader; the reader, though drawing on his understanding, is not exercising his will, and so is passive in this transaction, just as Descartes's narrator is passive when he perceives ideas

without yet deciding on their truth. And corresponding to the passivity of the subject is the inertia of the ideas perceived: they are things which only in judgement we relate to reality. This amounts to a certain conception of what it is to put words together. What discursive activity is is modelled on speaking without conviction. Language on a holiday - or rather, as in Frege's comparison, on stage - is taken to show us the essence of reason. But even when we are in the course of an investigation, searching for a solution to a problem, we do not put words together without conviction. To find the right words to say what we want to say is not a separate act from meaning it.

(2) That is not something about assertion, but about saying stuff generally. What is special about assertion is that it is the simplest thing to say, or at least the simplest thing to do with a combination of subject and predicate.[28] Assertion is not on a par with other speech acts, or

28 Commanding, issuing an invitation, and so on are even simpler: you don't even need a subject. Philosophers have often treated imperatives as taking a proposition as object, so that, "You will sit down," when said and understood with imperative intention, is to invite the second person to make this proposition true. (See, e.g., Davidson 1979) But making a proposition true is only one of the many things you can invite someone to do. Another one is to sit down.

Maybe it is because of this simplicity of imperatives that the first few examples of language-games in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations consist of imperative moves "Slab!", "Block!" When the question is raised whether such a game, in the absence of any more sophisticated moves, can be called a language, Wittgenstein responds with his famous city comparison (PI §18):

Don't let it bother you that languages (2) and (8) consist only of orders. If you want to say that they are therefore incomplete, ask yourself whether our own language is

with the occurrence of a proposition as antecedent or disjunct. Although a proposition can be used in non-assertoric ways, its *primary* use is in an act of judgement or assertion. When you want to explain to someone what the proposition » The sky is blue « means, what you explain is what it is for the sky to be blue, so what is judged in judging that the sky is blue. And so also in philosophy we cannot have a conception of propositions independently of a conception of judgement. I do not mean to say that a proposition is *improperly* used when it is used as, say, a question. It is just that such uses are in some way secondary to judgement or assertion, though it is not easy to spell out in which way. A question is understood against a background of knowing what it would be to answer it. But an answer is an assertion.

The Cartesian thinks that in order to merely suppose a proposition we only have to have it in mind; but in order to think it we need to do something in addition. But in truth it is the other way around. When you want to turn a combination of subject and predicate into a question, you add a question mark; in a disjunction, you add a disjunct; a supposition, you add “suppose”; but to assert it you don't add anything. We may think of the propositions » p « and » p? « as the same in respect of content but different in respect of force. But the difference is not that the second has something instead of the first: it has something in addition to the first. What the first has, the “assertoric force” dis-

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complete — whether it was so before the symbolism of chemistry and the notation of the infinitesimal calculus were incorporated in to it; for these are, so to speak, suburbs of our language.

Now it seems to me mistaken to think that we can make sense of a language consisting only of orders. If it were a city, it would be a city without schools, streets, public transport, and sanitation – that is, the essentials.

played by the verb or copula, is still there in the second. The question is whether things *are* this way, as opposed to *not* this way. It is a mistake to treat the assertion sign as on a par with a question mark. The same is true for disjunctions, hypotheticals, and so on. The assertion sign is trying to do what the predicate already does. But what the predicate does is clearly not comparable to what the question mark does. So to have "assertoric force" in this sense is not exactly the same as to be an assertion: it is to be an assertion unless the context, both linguistic and non-linguistic, says otherwise.

This is not a mere convention, as both Geach (1965) and Dummett (1973) thought.[29] In that case we should be able to imagine replacing this convention by something like an assertion sign. Let us accept that by default what is said is really meant, but the assertion sign distinguishes what is said from other speech acts. Its absence may be taken to mean that what is said is a question. To only combine name and verb

29 Geach dismisses the significance of a proposition's occurring by itself as "something of a clue to what is meant assertorically," and continues (456):

> There is a certain presumption - though of course it can be upset in various ways - that an author of a nonfictional work intends a sentence to be read as an assertion if it stands by itself between full stops and grammatically can be read as an assertion. The assertoric force of a sentence is thus shown by its not being enclosed in the context of a longer sentence.

He adds that there may be something corresponding to this in the realm of thought, mentioning Spinoza's example of a boy who thinks only of a winged horse, having no reason to think that it does not exist, and thereby believes in its existence. That is how I would describe it. Geach can only hear this example through a Cartesian prism; he writes that the boy, "cannot but assent to the thought of there being a winged horse." (457)

and thus to express an indicative sentence would, in this language, be to ask a question. In order to make an assertion we would, say, have to put an exclamation mark behind it. But then what if we knew both that it either rains or pours, and that it doesn't pour? We could write, » It rains or it pours! « and » It doesn't pour! « to obtain » It rains «. It seems we would have no right to place an exclamation mark behind this conclusion: what is obtained by disjunction elimination is exactly the first disjunct, nothing more and nothing less, and the first disjunct is, as such, without exclamation mark. Nor can we put an exclamation mark behind each disjunct to begin with: the disjuncts are not asserted. But without exclamation mark, the conclusion means only the question “Is it raining?” If asking questions were the default in the way that assertion is now, disjunctions could only be disjunctions between questions, and the same for hypotheticals and so on. Our thought experiment falls apart: what may seem to be only a convention really belongs to the essence of thinking. And it is this which doesn't allow the problems which the judgement stroke is supposed to resolve even to get started.

In conclusion, two things are going wrong with the Fregean treatment of assertion. First, assertion is tasked with turning a name into a claim. But there is no need for this: as a key opens a lock, so an indicative sentence already expresses a claim. Second, assertion is put on a par both with making as if to assert and with other speech acts. The assertion sign is supposed to indicate the speaker's taking a side in both contrasts. But neither work can be done by a special sign which we add to the proposition. The first is the default for saying stuff, and the second is the default for combining name and verb. The context, both lin-

guistic and non-linguistic, can mean that this case is not default, but we should not confuse the absence of cancelling embedding with the presence of a force indicator. To do so is to take away the life of signs, and then there is no way to breathe life into it again by means of another sign: this additional sign will be just as dead, as semantically inert, as all signs now seem to be.[30]

2 Though this is a view of thinking, it is hardly distinguishable from the conception of perceptual experience, and what in it we experience, which I defended in the previous chapter. It amounts to a rejection of the basic conviction which underlies both dualism and Fregean monism: that to be aware of something is not to take any stance on how it is. I argued that that conviction in the end means that the presence of things in experience cannot be self-conscious awareness of how things are. In the present chapter I have tried to go to the root of this conviction, finding it both in the Descartes's fourth *Meditation* and in the way Frege construes the distinction between act and content. My deeper aim in rejecting that view is to reject the separation of will and understanding. That separation makes the will seem blind, and the understanding seem powerless, its content inert.

The dualist has an additional reason to conceive perceptual judgement dualistically: sensibility cannot be informed by the understanding, so that it, and what we experience, cannot already be conceptually shaped. I believe that McDowell and others have said what needs to be said in order to correct for this. But although McDowell allows for sensibility

30 Compare "Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? — In use it *lives*. Is it there that it has living breath within it? — Or is the *use* its breath?" (Wittgenstein, PI §432)

informed by the understanding, he still, per the Cartesian conception, separates the understanding and the will. That means that he holds on to the idea that perceptual judgement consists of two acts: one of "content's being available to one" (10) (being under an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so), and one of affirmation (taking the appearance at face value) or denial (rejecting it as an illusion). The first moment is something like an "invitation" to make a judgement, as he later put it, "I think receiving an impression, having things appear to one a certain way, does not itself imply accepting anything, not even that things appear to one that way." (McDowell 2002: 278) This is saddled with all the problems of the Cartesian paradigm. The moment of presentation seems inert, powerless to convince the subject, whereas the moment of affirmation or denial seems blind. These problems dissolve when we think of perceptual experience as paradigmatically a successful exercise of our capacity for knowledge, as McDowell himself suggests in other work (McDowell 2011). But that should really mean a rejection of the Cartesian view. To see how things are is not to be presented with a thinkable content, to which we then still need to attach a force. On that view, it comes to seem that the thinkable content is on our mind. But what is actually on our mind are what the constituents of the content are of: some thing we think of, being some way we think it is. To see things is already to see that things are thus and so.

The Fregean monist view of experience comes together, at least implicitly, with a relational conception of truth and judgement: for a thinkable content to be true is for it to be the same as a fact. Maybe that is already saying too much, since on McDowell's view, truth is really indefinable: it is not that truth lies in the sameness of thinkable and

fact; rather, as Hornsby puts it, “is true” and “is a fact” mean the same. But we cannot help but want some kind of asymmetry between thinking and being. Our thinking answers to the facts: the facts make our thinking true, not the other way around. And so although it is right, I believe, that truth is a oneness of thinking and being, we also need to preserve a certain asymmetry between thinking and being. Just as that asymmetry goes missing in the deflationary formula “p is true iff p,” so it goes missing in McDowell's formula, “I can think that spring has begun, and that very same thing, that spring has begun, can be the case.” (McDowell 1994: 27)

According to Frege, truth is indefinable. Since judgement aims at truth, and since the content of a judgement is not yet the claim that it names the True, it seems that, on Frege's view, judgement aims for something beyond itself. But we cannot say what it is, because upon reflection the difference dissolves. The regress Frege notes is a version of the one I described before (Frege 1918):

> In a definition certain characteristics (*Merkmale*) would have to be stated, and in application to a particular case the question would always arise whether it is true that the characteristics are present — so one goes round in a circle.

Truth would indeed be indefinable if we had to do it in that way, by looking at a thought, and saying of it when it would be true. But if we stop looking at the thought and instead take up the standpoint of judgement, we can define truth as *being so*: for me to think truly is for the things I think of to be the ways I think them to be. When I think truly » The wave is rising «, this is because the wave is, in fact, rising. Here on the right-hand side I use (not mention) the proposition to explain why

it is true. Falsehood can be defined similarly: for it to be false to say » The wave is rising « is for the wave to be not rising.

The insight in Fregean monism is that when we think truly, there is no distance, no gap, between our thinking and the reality which determines its truth. Truth lies in a oneness of thinking and being. But this oneness is not a sameness of thinkable and fact. To describe it in that way is to stand back from a judgement and reflect on it, relating it to the world from this perspective. This is the standpoint forced upon us by the Cartesian view. But from the standpoint which we take up in judgement, what is on our mind is not the thinkable content, but the thing we think of, and the way we think it to be. So the oneness of thinking and being finds better expression in the formula above, which is Aristotle's: "It is because of the thing's being, or not being, thus-and-so that the predication is said to be true or false." (Aristotle, Cat. 5:4b 8–10) Not, "The very thing which one can think can also be the case," but: the very thing I think of can be the very way I think it is. But the formula simultaneously captures the asymmetry between thinking and being. The circumstance explains the truth of the claim, not the other way around: "It is not because of our having the true thought that you are pale, that you are pale; rather it is because of your being pale that we who say so have a true thought." (Aristotle, Met. Th.10: 1051b 6–9)

3 I do not say much in this dissertation about the sense/reference distinction. In one way, the notion of sense is central to the present issue. Behind the notion of sense lies the idea that thoughts (and concepts) are to be individuated according to their cognitive significance.

This is also central to McDowell's *Mind and World*. He can, he writes, formulate a main point of his lectures in terms of the Fregean notion of sense (180):

> [I]t is in the context of that notion that we should reflect about the relation of thought to reality, in order to immunize ourselves against the familiar philosophical anxieties. … [T]he whole point of the notion of sense is captured by the principle that thoughts, potential senses of whole utterances, differ if a single subject can simultaneously take rationally conflicting stances towards them (say, any two of acceptance, rejection, and neutrality) without thereby standing convicted of irrationality.

Although I sympathise with the general idea, this formulation is another expression of the Cartesian paradigm. It is as if we could think a contradiction on pain of being sent to corrective training. But if the will and the intellect are one and the same, there is just no such thing as thinking a contradiction, just as there is no such thing as not believing something once one has sufficient reason to believe it.[31] Judgement is not a free, spontaneous act in response to being given the content. So we can remove the redundant qualifying phrase. The reference to time ("simultaneously") may also be distracting. It is not really about simultaneity; you cannot, without *changing your mind,* think p and not p at different times either. What is left is the Kantian idea that representations are to be individuated according to whether they can be held together in one consciousness. And that is certainly my general

31 If something has a sense when it can be thought, then a contradiction is, as the Tractatus says, without sense (*sinnlos*), though not nonsense (*unsinnig*) since it is part of the symbolism: something is shown by the fact that combining symbols in this way one gets a contradiction.

approach.

That is not yet to say anything about reference. One can think of the sense/reference distinction as an answer to a puzzle which arises when one is inclined, as comes natural in the tradition started by Frege, to hear such phrases as “what is said” and “what is seen” purely extensionally, so that the way in which it is said or seen (Frege's “Art des Gegebenseins”) does not enter into their semantic value. Thinking in this way, one is bound to become puzzled about the informativeness of true identity statements, or the possibility of distinguishing between thoughts and concepts which are extensionally identical. How can “a = b” say anything if the semantic contribution made by “a” and by “b” is determined purely by the things they stand for? How can we distinguish between two different thoughts - that Venus is self-identical; that the morning star is the evening star - when they are true in the same possible circumstances? In answer to this puzzlement, we can remind ourselves of the criterion of cognitive significance, and see that concepts and thoughts which are extensionally the same can still differ in this way.

But the sense/reference distinction easily lends itself to a dualistic construal, as happens when Frege speaks of a step from sense to reference. When we individuate thoughts according to the criterion of cognitive significance, we draw them closely to the mind, and this intimacy may seem to contrast with the otherness of that which determines the truth of our thinking. And so it may seem that when I speak of a circumstance, I am speaking of something in the realm of reference, whereas claims are in the realm of sense. But we must not confuse the distinction between claim and circumstance with that between sense and

reference. The latter distinction cuts across the first. We can individuate both claims and circumstances extensionally, so that the claim/circumstance that Venus is self-identical is the same as the claim/circumstance that the morning star is the evening star, and we can individuate both finely, so that these claims/circumstances are distinguished. We individuate them finely when we use the criterion of cognitive significance. It is true that this draws circumstances close to the mind, but that is just the point: our surroundings, when we are at home in them, are not radically other. But we can still recognise that different circumstances can be the same in this respect. We can distinguish between Venus as morning star and Venus as evening star, as we do when we say that they are two different aspects of one and the same thing. Venus as morning star and Venus as evening star are not products of the mind. It is the way things are, the relative position of Earth and Venus, which allows for these two different perspectives on Venus.

So I do not disagree with the need for a notion of sense, thus understood. It is only a mistake to think of sense and reference as two separate things, like a lens and what is seen through it. They are more like a planet (or the concept of a planet), and the planet as seen from a certain angle (or the concept of a planet as seen from a certain angle). The mistake would be to think that Venus, or its being as it is, or its being identical to itself, makes it true that the morning star is the evening star. It is easy to think this when it is thought that a reference is independent of a sense, as if it is something about our mind or language that there are these different perspectives on the reference. It then seems that in giving a theory of truth we can relate reference and sense

from sideways-on: it is true to think this sense because of this reference. It is true that the morning star is the evening star because Venus is self-identical. But *that Venus is self-identical* would be just another sense. The most the view could come to is that coarsely individuated thoughts can be used in explaining why finely individuated thoughts are true. But that isn't so. Because we do not understand why it is true that the morning star is the evening star once we understand, which we do anyway, that Venus is self-identical. » The morning star is the evening star « is true because the morning star is, in fact, the evening star — if the proposition on the left-hand side is finely individuated, in accordance with the criterion of cognitive significance, the proposition on the right-hand side must be, too.

Claims/circumstances individuated either way can figure in the idea that "seeing that something is the case" is a receptive achievement. Looking at a computer simulation of our solar system one can *see* that the morning star is the evening star. Of course one can only see this against a background of knowing how to identify the morning star and how to identify the evening star, which, after all, is part of having these concepts. But knowing this, to see that they are the same is to see that Venus passes through both points over its course through the sky. If there is such a thing as seeing that Venus is self-identical, maybe it is to see Venus as *one* body over the course of a simulated night. To see that the morning star is the evening star is, one could say, an aspect of this achievement: it is to see that this one body is first in the one place and then in the other.

Conclusions

On the Cartesian view, judgement is an act of free will in response to being given a thinkable content. To think, write or say a proposition is merely to put it forward as supposition; to assert it one has to do something in addition. But then a proposition comes to seem forceless, and so not yet something that can be affirmed or denied. But that is incoherent: to think that p is, on this conception, not to think that p. We can find a resolution to the paradox when we see that things are really the other way around: to think, write, or say a proposition is, by default, already to make a claim; to put it forward as mere supposition, or as another speech act, or as clause of a larger assertion, is to do something in addition, or to think, write or say the proposition in a context which means that it is not asserted.

This amounts to a rethinking of the relation between spontaneity (will, judgement) and receptivity (perception, understanding). On the Cartesian conception, spontaneity is a response to receptivity. We exercise free will in response to being given something. On the Spinozistic conception, we do not have free will except in so far as we understand: we can only think what we think is true.

Within such a conception, monism can come into its own. To be aware of something is already to be aware of how it is: seeing things is seeing that things are thus and so. Truth (falsehood) lies in being (not) so: » The man is pale « is true (false) because the man is (not) pale. So there is a distinction and an asymmetry between thinking and being, between claims and circumstances, but this distinction is not one of different things which stand in some relation to each other.

The guiding idea behind Frege's notion of sense – individuating thoughts and concepts according to the criterion of cognitive significance – is central to this sort of conception. But we must not confuse the sense/reference distinction with the claim/circumstance distinction. The first cuts across the second: both claims and circumstances can be individuated finely, according to the criterion of cognitive significance, while allowing for two different claims/circumstances to be extensionally the same—that is, to be aspects of one and the same thing.

With that I conclude the positive statement of my own view. In the coming two chapters, I will mainly be concerned with a critique of the views of Travis and McDowell. These view are instances of dualism and Fregean monism respectively, and in that way should also throw some light on the descriptions of those views given in the previous chapter. I also hope my own view will stand out more clearly in contrast to theirs.

III Reaching beyond the conceptual

§1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss three theses of Charles Travis. The first and central thesis expresses a dualism of scheme and content. According to Travis, the world - what thought answers to, and what is given in perception - is not conceptually structured. When we say how things are, the words we use impose a conceptual structure onto the world, but the world is not in itself already partitioned in that way.[32] So it is not already structured in things one can think or speak of, and ways one can truly think or say they are. What thought answers to, and what is given in perception, is infinitely particular: it is *the* way things are (or "things being as they are"), so that if things were in any way different, they wouldn't be the way they are.[33] By contrast, a thought, that which can be true or false, is something general. For anything that one can say

32 "To represent things as a certain way is to impose, or deploy, a particular scheme for categorizing things being as they are" (Travis 2008: 162)

"[A thought]'s generality is also a scheme for partitioning the world: there are those things whose being as they are is their falling under that generality, and there are those things whose being as they are is not that." (Travis 2011: 2)

33 "It is that pig's being as it now is, or was last Tuesday at 10, or something else's being as it now is, which is, or is not, a case of something snuffling. Such are the particular cases which *instance* such generalities as a way *for* a thing to be. (Of course, the pig is not as it is unless things (catholic reading) are as *they* are. We could say: the pig reflects things in general from its own porcine point of view.)" (Travis 2013: 4)

or think to be so, there are endlessly many cases of things being as they are that would count as cases of things being so.[34] Say for example that it is raining. Then there is some unique way in which it is now raining. It would still be true that it is raining even if things were somewhat different than the way they are: if the rain were falling harder, or from a different angle, or were of a different pH level, or if there were different people walking about, and so on *ad infinitum*. Travis concludes that for the thought to be true is for it to stand in a relation to the particular case. He calls this relation *instancing* when seen from one direction (the particular case instances the thought), and *reaching* when seen from the other (the thought reaches to the particular case).[35]

The second thesis is that a thought, what can be true or false, is in itself a forceless, structureless whole. It is distinguished both from what one commits oneself to in a judgement, and from the linguistic means needed to grasp or express it. A thought is not what one commits oneself to in a judgement, that it *is* raining, but the thing that one thus presents as true: that it is raining (try to hear the copula without assertoric force).[36] As such, this thing is defined by when it would be

34 "... if things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes, such is one way for this to happen—one among indefinitely many ways. Nor is this feature peculiar to things being such that Sid smokes. It is built into the very idea of a way for things to be; a feature of any such way." (Travis 2013: 6)

35 "In the terminology used in these essays, a way for things to be (or for *a* thing to be) *reaches to*, or is *instanced by*, indefinitely many distinct (possible) cases." (Travis 2013: 6)

36 Travis puts this point in terms of a distinction between "representing as" and "representing to be". "Representing *as* may be merely representing things *be-*

true, which means, according to the first thesis, when things being as they are would be a case of things being so. In expressing the thought in words, or analysing it, we read some structure into it: we can think of its truth as turning on how some element of the world is, and whether it is some way for elements of the world to be.[37] In that way we also impose a structure onto the world.[38] But we can do so in endlessly many ways, on different occasions, for different intents and purposes.[39] The way we should structure a thought is relative to human sensibilities and present purposes. So a conceptual structure is something merely psychological; it is merely a way of presenting the thought to ourselves and others in visible or audible form.[40] The

ing thus and so. It thus ranges wider than representing *to be*. One might represent Pia *as* the darling of the silver screen (for example, by drawing her in an open-top Duesenberg, silk scarf fluttering, waving as to fans), without in the least suggesting that she *is* one." (Travis 2013: 27)

37 "A thought makes truth turn on whether things (catholic reading) are a certain way. What it thus does can be broken down, decomposed, into parts. If the thought makes truth turn on whether that pig is snuffling, it does this, in part, in making truth turn on who, or what, is snuffling, and in part in making truth turn on how that pig is." (Travis 2013: 4)

38 "Conceptual schemes (of course) belong to the conceptual. What they capture —what falls under, or fits, them—belongs to the non-conceptual. If they are adequate, what they are adequate to is things being as they are, which *admits* of being articulated in the way they call for." (Travis 2013: 132)

39 "[T]he way things are factors differently (and in mutually incompatible ways) into ways things are on different occasions for the factoring." (Travis 2013: 132) See also Travis 2008.

40 "the work words do in meaning what they do—the work for which they are

thought in itself, apart from some way of expressing it, is a forceless, structureless whole.

The third thesis is a form of naïve realism. According to Travis, to be given the particular case in perception is not something we do, not even in the sense in which believing and knowing are things we do.[41] In so far as perception is a receptive achievement, it is not, as knowledge and belief are, an expression of rational agency. It is merely something that happens to us, something which our senses do for us. Travis thinks of receptivity as a matter of having access to our surroundings; this affords an opportunity to judge how things are. Our senses "merely bring our surroundings into view for us; afford us some awareness of them." (Travis 2013: 30) In response we decide for ourselves which things can be said to be there, and how they can be said to be. To see that it is raining is really to tell, on the basis of being given the particular case, that it can count as a case of things being such that it is raining. The particular case is before our eyes; the generality we bring it under is not. On this view, one cannot see (in the sense of

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thus equipped—is entirely at this first step [of expressing thoughts], and not (directly) a contribution to that work, at the second stage, of being true or false (a truth or falsehood) at all. In this sense, meaning is not to be understood in terms of the notion of being true. On this view, a sentence is a dedicated device for achieving representing. As I will understand this, used for what it is for, it makes a specific contribution to achieving recognition of how things are thus represented as being. It is a specialised tool for use in *authoring* representing." (Travis forthcoming b)

41 Travis describes a perceptual experience as "something one undergoes - something inflicted on, suffered by, one," and he adds, "And it is unclear what it would mean to suffer something intentionally." (Travis 2015: 45)

awareness of what is there before one's eyes) that things are thus and so. Anything that can be expressed in words is an abstract thing which lies outside of what is given, standing in a relation to it.

I will argue against all three theses, and more generally, against the form of realism which Travis in this way defends. Travis is motivated by the conviction that reality, as it is given in perceptual experience, must be independent of thought. One way or another, every philosopher will want to say as much, at least in the minimal sense that saying so doesn't make it so. What is characteristic of Travis's form of realism is this, he analyses what it is to be aware of how things are as falling apart into two moments, two distinct forms of awareness: passively receiving what is there, and actively making out how things are; and correspondingly, he draws a distinction between two separate objects of awareness: the particular case, and a thought. Described at such a level of abstraction, this form of realism is still very common, even though Travis develops it in original ways. But it is not the only option. It may be helpful if I briefly restate my alternative, which to Travis looks idealistic.

On the contrasting conception, the world consists not only of what is particular, but of a unity of particularity (matter) and generality (form). The world is all things one can think of, being all the ways one can truly think they are. It is true that the world consists of particulars - the leaves, their rustling - which we can only think or speak about. But thinking answers to how things are. In speaking about things, we do not speak about how things are. In speaking about things, we say how things are. So truth does not lie in a relation between a thought and something given, but in a oneness of thinking and being: we can think

or say of something that it is some way, and when we think truly, the very thing we think of is the very way we think it is. Correspondingly, in perceptual experience things are present to us, but for them to be present to us is for us to see how they manifestly are. This includes at least how things are spatio-temporally and causally arranged, and in the case of animals, what they are doing. Just as the rain's falling is not a thing in addition to the rain, so one's seeing that the rain is falling is not an act in addition to seeing the rain. To see that the rain is falling can be genuinely a visual (receptive) achievement, a matter of finding a conceptual form enmattered in the here and now. In order to make sense of this, we have to reject the Fregean separation of thought, force, and sentence.

Although I will disagree with Travis both in essentials and in details, I believe he is one of the most incisive and consistent proponents of the first type of realism. Few philosophers would endorse all three theses, but these theses are merely the result of thinking consistently through the commitments of what Wilfrid Sellars called “the framework of givenness,” and that framework is still very much in place in contemporary philosophy. So it seems to me that a critique of his view can serve as a critique of the type of philosophy it instantiates.

I will proceed as follows. In §2 I introduce the formula, “Things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes.” Unfolding this formula is unfolding Travis's philosophy. In §3 I discuss the Fregean background, which explains what the formula is supposed to do. It is supposed to say what we do in judging a thought to be true. But why does it take this specific form? I explain this by means of two related forms of realism (in addition to Frege's anti-psychologism)

which Travis defends: scheme-content dualism (§4), and naïve realism (§5). The upshot of all this is a conception of the world as lying beyond the conceptual sphere, as comes to expression in the formula. In §6 I argue why that conception makes no sense.

§2 Travis's Move

I will have to discuss pretty much every aspect of his philosophy, but it is best to begin where Travis himself begins—with his theory of representation, or what comes to the same, his theory of truth. Travis holds that representation is a three-place relation between a representing subject, a thought, and a particular case.[42] For Sid to represent the pig as snuffling is really this, it is for Sid to bring the particular case of things being as they are under the thought that the pig is snuffling.[43] Sid does so truly when the particular case does fall under the thought.[44] In Travis's terminology, the particular case then instances the thought; the thought reaches to this particular case. So Travis offers something like a theory of truth: for it to be true that *p* is for things being as they

42 "We can think of representing-as as a three-place relation: in the first place, a representer (some agent, or some item by which he represents, or, perhaps, some item which, in some other way, bears content); in the second place, what is represented as something or other; in the third place, a way for what occupies the second place to be represented as being." (Travis 2013: 3)

43 "Things being such-and-such way is … that third term which a whole thought fixes. … What … occupies the second place … is *history*, or historical—what encompasses such episodes as that bird chirping on the branch, the pig snuffling around the roots below. Things being as they are (history being as it is, or has been so far) is, or is not, things being such that a pig is snuffling." (Travis 2013: 4)

44 "If the thought is true, then it is things being as they are which is (a case of) things being as represented." (Travis 2013: 4)

are to be a case of (to instance) things being such that *p*.[45]

The purpose of the formula is to draw a contrast between the particularity of the changeable world (the historical), and the generality of thought (the conceptual). For anything that one can think, there are endlessly many ways for things to be so that they are accordingly—

45 Travis tends to start his investigations at this point, introducing the thesis by quoting Frege's *Kernsatz 4*: "A thought always contains something by means of which it reaches beyond the particular case to present this to consciousness as falling under something general." But although the pressures underlying Travis's thesis are present in Frege, the latter rejected any attempt to define truth, in particular the attempt to define truth as a relation between a thought and something else.

It seems to me that the thesis is closer to J.L. Austin's conception of truth (1950: 116): "A statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions."

Travis, like Austin, is partly motivated by occasion-sensitivity (see Travis 2008). The same idea, which he calls "conceptual relativity", led Putnam to a similar definition of truth (1991: 115): "The suggestion I am making, in short, is that *a statement is true of a situation just in case it would be correct to use the words of which the statement consists in that way in describing the situation*. Provided the concepts in question are not themselves ones which we ought to reject for one reason or another, we can explain what 'correct to use the words of which the statement consists in that way' means by saying that it means nothing more nor less than that a sufficiently well placed speaker who used the words in that way would be fully warranted in *counting* the statement as true of that situation."

and so endlessly many possible cases of things' being accordingly. In thinking that something is some way, we bring the world, the particular case, under the generality of the thought. There is a shift here from ordinary discourse. One would expect that in thinking of the pig that it is snuffling, one brings the pig under a generality; namely, the concept of snuffling. But Travis thinks there is still something general about the pig. Although the pig does belong to the historical, it takes the concept of a pig to individuate it as such. The world in itself, what thought answers to and what is given in perception, is not already partitioned in that way. So Travis is led to conceive of what is particular as things "in a catholic sense" (that is, in an all-encompassing sense), so that it is a solecism to ask "Which things?"[46] What is brought under a generality is not an element of the world but the world as such. And the generality it is brought under is not a way for an element of the world to be, but a thought, which Travis thinks of as a way for the world to be. To represent *the pig* as *snuffling* is really to represent *the world* as *being such that the pig is snuffling*. Travis treats the world (things being as they are) as itself a particular, and the thought as a concept of a way for the world to be.[47]

It is not difficult to see the picture which guides Travis. Like others

46 "I will also speak of a zero-place concept; for example, my cup (now) being empty. This is not a way for an n-tuple of objects to be, for any positive n. It is rather a way for *things* to be. Here 'things' has its catholic sense, as in 'Things have been slow around here lately'." (Travis 2013: 93) It seems to me that this example does not quite suit his purpose. In any mundane use of such a phrase one may still ask for specification. "What has been slow lately?" - "Business."

47 A concept of "a way for the world to be" is what Travis calls "a zero-place concept", in the sense on which the concept of smoking is a 1-place concept.

before him, he is impressed by the infinite particularity of the changeable world, and the way this seems to contrast with the discreteness and finitude of words. One of his main inspirations is J.L. Austin, who warned against modelling the world on the word, and wrote, "[S]tatements fit the facts always more or less loosely, in different ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes." (Austin 1950: 124) Austin describes the world as held together by relations of similarity and dissimilarity, but not already structured in the ways that we structure it when we say how things are. The relations of similarity are natural; those between words and world are conventional. The first allow conventions, so to say, to get a grip on things.[48] (Similarly, Travis distinguishes between relations of effect-representing, which are natural, and the three-place relation of representation which, if not conventional, is still determined by human sensibilities.) This suggests a picture on which the changeable world is continuous in a way that contrasts with language, which carves the world up in discrete blocks, in things and properties. But don't we also perceive discrete boundaries in the world? Don't some things exhibit a kind of internal unity, staying the same thing over time, and hanging together with other things causally and in other ways? (How else could there be relations of similarity and dissimilarity? Some things, of some comparable sorts, can be similar or dissimilar in some respect.) From the perspective of Austin, it is true to *say* that there is this kind of unity and discord in the world, but in doing so we carve the world up in ways which are

48 "The world must exhibit (we must observe) similarities and dissimilarities … : if everything were either absolutely indistinguishable from everything else or completely unlike everything else, there would be nothing to say." (Austin 1950: 115)

relative to our sensibilities and interests. The way of carving up is something we are responsible for, not the world. In philosophy we have to get clear on who is responsible for what, "above all in discussing truth, where it is precisely our business to prise the words off the world and keep them off it." (118) I think this is also a good model for seeing what Travis is trying to do, though with a Fregean twist: "ways for things to be" instead of words.

Reading Travis's recent work, it seems the infinite particularity of the historical - for anything that one can think, there are endlessly many ways for things to be accordingly - is already supposed to justify his move. My immediate task is to show that this is not so. First note that the formula by itself, when heard without Travis's deeper intentions in mind, is merely convoluted. Instead of saying of the world that it is such that the pig is snuffling, it would be more straightforward simply to say of the pig that it is snuffling. It is as if Travis is saying, "I walked to the station in one of the ways of walking there." This draws attention to the way in which he walked to the station. It invites the question, "Oh, in which way was that then? Across the bridge? Through the tunnel?" Travis may respond, "I walked across the bridge; that is, I walked across the bridge in one of the ways of doing so," again inviting the same counter question. The only way to stop the regress would be to add, "In *the* way that I did it," which is in effect what Travis's formula does say. But what could be the point of saying that?

We have to understand the philosophical pressures under which saying, "Things being as they are is things being such that …", can seem philosophically insightful, even if admittedly uninformative. The point - but of course only in the context of a philosophical discussion -

would be Austin's: to prise the words (or ways for things to be) off the world (things being as they are). For Travis, *the* way one walks to the station belongs to the world, whereas *a* way of walking to the station belongs to thought. Travis believes that what is general cannot be there in the world, and that philosophers are making a grave mistake when they ignore, deny or forget it. That is why he thinks there is a point in reminding them of this fundamental feature of reality, "the particularity, the concreteness, of the non-conceptual" (2013: 127) It is this assumption which turns what would otherwise be a merely convoluted paraphrase into a philosophical thesis. It is, then, this assumption that we have to understand. I do not want to challenge the idea that a thought exhibits a certain generality, nor that in experience something concrete and particular is immediately present to us. But why can't the general inhere in the particular? Since the world here means the sensible world, we can also put the question in this way: even if what is before our eyes is only one case of a snuffling pig, unique in its way, why can't we *see*, in and by seeing the unique scene, that there is a pig there, and what it is doing? (That is, why can't "seeing that" be a receptive achievement, a matter of awareness of what is there?)

It seems to me that, having isolated the thesis from what would otherwise be merely a paraphrase, there is something suspect about it. Can we really conceive of the world as a thing which, in thinking, we bring under a generality? Shouldn't the world be something radically different from an element of itself? If the world were a thing which, in thinking, we bring under a generality, it would not be all there is. What makes a thought true would be - not the world - but how the world is; that is, that it falls under the generality. And now "how the world is"

would be what thought answers to, so what should really be called the world. Again, can we think of a thought as a way for the world to be? Shouldn't a thought be something radically different from a component of itself? A way for things to be is not something we can think; we can only think that something is that way. So if a thought is a way for things to be, we cannot think a thought, we can only think that the world is accordingly. But what is a thought if it cannot be thought? If there is a categorical distinction between a world and its elements, and a thought and its components, then Travis breaches categorical distinctions. (I will return to these problems.)

It will take me a while to explain fully how Travis is led to his move from ordinary objects of reference to "things being as they are". For this I will sometimes have to depart from the way Travis understands himself. He thinks of himself as a philosopher in the tradition of Frege and Austin, merely "unfolding concepts" (Frege) and making observations on "what we would say when" (Austin). One can indeed understand such remarks as, "That the pig is before you is not before you," (Travis, forthcoming a) as observations on ordinary grammar: this negation has to be understood as "It does not make sense to say…". But Travis, like his guides, is also a very systematic philosopher. My impression is that when it comes to the heart of the matter, his system, or the underlying motivations, informs observation rather than the other way around.[49] Travis views the mundane through a metaphysical

49 Take for instance his influential and suggestively titled paper "The Silence of the Senses". His aim there is to oppose representationalism about perceptual experience. To see things is not to represent things as being some way, nor for things to be presented to us as being some way. Representation is something we do in response to what our senses do for us: "our senses merely bring our

lens, a form of metaphysics made possible by anti-psychologism. It is characteristic of his philosophy to find a logical structure hidden underneath the structure that is manifest to the thinking, perceiving subject. This latter structure he thinks of as merely psychological. Although we normally say, "Sid smokes," this is really to say, "Things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes." Although we speak of seeing that Sid is smoking, and to do so is not temporally or psychologically distinguishable from seeing what Sid is doing, to do so is really to tell that Sid is smoking on the basis of seeing things being as they are.

It is difficult to find one's way into the system, and once inside, even more difficult to find one's way out. Each element supports the other, and has to be understood in the light of the whole view, so that strictly speaking, no single element can be introduced without first introducing the others. But I can only present it in a linear narrative. For this purpose I will start with the Fregean framework within which Travis develops his view. Within this framework, there is a move to be made

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surroundings into view; afford us some sort of awareness of them. It is then for us to make of what is in our view what we can, or do." (Travis 2013: 30) The bulk of the paper is taken up by a supposedly exhaustive survey of the ways in which we talk about looks and appearances. But its central claim is that these divide neatly into two categories: visible looks which cannot be thought, and thinkable looks which cannot be seen. To think there is more, that its looking to one as if things are some way can be both visible and thinkable, is to try to "mix two immiscable notions" (47). But this is not anymore an observation on what we would say when. That the survey is exhaustive is not part of the data collected. It is the expression of a philosophical conviction, alluded to as "Frege's point," which he does not there spell out.

from a thought to a judgement, and so from the thought to what is out there when the thought is true. This will allow me to say what Travis's formula - “Things being as they are is a case of things being such that *p*.” - is supposed to do. I will then discuss ideas more particular to Travis, which can help make sense of the specific form which the formula takes. These ideas, like the framework itself, revolve around a contrast between the passivity of receptivity and the activity of judgement. Along the way I will express my criticism of the moves being made, but only in the end I will argue that the resulting separation of the conceptual and the historical is nonsensical.

§3 Anti-psychologism

1 Travis inherits the notion of a thought from Frege, in particular from the late essay “Der Gedanke”. There Frege introduces this notion in the context of distinguishing the subject matter of logic from that of the empirical sciences. But it is evident that the deeper aim is to safeguard logic from all that is merely subjective, changeable, and empirical. Logic, Frege writes, is the study of the laws of truth. This distinguishes it first of all from psychology. It does not study how human beings happen to think, but how they should think in order to reach the aim of thought: truth. It would not be of interest to logic if everyone thought that 2+2=5, since it would not bear on what it is correct to think. Nor is logic concerned with how people should think in some specific area of human inquiry, such as biology or chemistry. The way to think in some specific area is not yet a law of truth. In logic we study not this or that truth (the biological ones, the psychological ones) but what truth is as such. In Aristotelian jargon one might say logic is

the study of truth *qua* truth—or what should come to the same, the study of being *qua* being: it does not study this or that thing in the world (human bodies, human minds), but what the world is as such.

Given this ambition, it may seem better not to introduce a kind of thing which logic is supposed to be about. Nonetheless, Frege introduces a thought - which is a thing, but as it soon turns out, not a thing in the world - as the bearer of a truth value: "Without meaning to give a definition, I call a thought something for which the question of truth arises," (Frege 1918: 292) Frege writes. That may only mean that a thought is that which can be true or false. But as Travis insightfully explains, the crucial thing for Frege is that a thought determines a question of truth, one for the world, and only the world, to answer. A thought is defined by when it would be true. It thus belongs to the order of being true, and is to be distinguished from what is needed to hold a thought to be true, or to present it to ourselves or others in visible or audible form.

It is this distinction, even opposition, between being true and holding true, which lies at the source of Frege's separation between three separate acts (Frege 1918: 294):

(1) The apprehension of a thought – thinking;

(2) the acknowledgement of the truth a thought – judgement;

(3) the manifestation of this judgement – assertion;

Correspondingly, Frege distinguishes between three separate items: (1) the thought; (2) the assertoric force; (3) the sentence. It is really one

separation, in which thought falls apart three ways. Since I have already treated this separation in the second chapter, but since, on the other hand, it is essential to the present topic, I will now only briefly repeat the paradox again.

Given the notion of a thought (that things are thus and so) as distinguished from what one commits oneself to in a judgement (that things *are* thus and so), something is added to the thought when we hold it to be true. It must be, because to grasp the thought cannot already be to hold it to be true. Moreover, for there to be such a thing to think cannot already be for it to be true to think it. There is the thought, and then there may be, or there may not be, what is out there when the thought is true. When we judge that things are so, we do not merely have the thought on our mind (that it is raining); we also say that it is true (that it *is* raining). We thus relate the thought to what is out there. This is what Frege came to call the step from *Sinn* to *Bedeutung*; that is, from the sense of a sentence, a thought, to its reference, a truth value.

But "it is asserted" cannot add anything to the thought. The relation drawn in the act of assertion is not something which we can spell out in words. Sometimes Frege suggests that "in language" the assertoric force is associated with the main verb of the sentence. But he is also committed to the main verb being, as such, inert, since the same form of words may occur both asserted and unasserted. Nor can we bring the form of words to life by adding "is true" or "it is asserted" to it, or, as I have been doing in a doomed attempt to present the view, italicising the main verb or copula. According to Frege, the words "is true" do not add any content to the thought, and the same would obviously hold for italicising the copula. The thought that it is true that it is raining is the

same as the thought that it *is* raining is the same as the thought that it is raining. What would make a difference is to assert the thought - to say that it is raining-, but this difference cannot be made explicit in the form of a contribution to the content. It is not possible to say, put into words, what assertion contributes to the thought, because the contribution is not one of words, but one of relating what words express to the world.

This is a characteristic occurrence in Frege's philosophy. His own position pushes him to the point where he feels the deep issue is ineffable, and he has to ask the reader not to begrudge him "a pinch of salt" when he nonetheless tries to convey it. Like many Fregeans, Travis inherits the view without feeling the force of these difficulties. He distinguishes between a realm of thought or sense (the conceptual) and one of actuality or reference (the historical), and seems to find it unproblematic to describe the relations between them. Even though in everyday life one would express the thought that Sid smokes by saying, for example, "Sid smokes," from the philosophical perspective taken up by Travis this is to be paraphrased as, "Things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes." (Travis 2013: 6) This as it were makes explicit what is added to a thought by asserting it. It makes explicit the relation one then draws between thought and world. Travis expresses this, for example, as follows (Travis 2011: 232):

> Judging is engaging with the world precisely so as to be right or wrong about it according to how it is. A thought is the content of a judgement. It is, that is, a particular way of making one's fate—being right or wrong—depend on how the world is. It decides how the way things are *matters* to thus being right or wrong, how the world is to speak to that. It does that in fixing when things

being as they are would be one's being right. The thought is that things are such that *p*; one is right just where things being as they are *is* things being such that *p*. The role of the thought is to fix when this would be.

One sees here the Fregean separation between the thought ("the thought is that things are such that *p*") and what one commits oneself to in a judgement ("things being as they are *is* things being such that *p*" - the emphasis is Travis's). It is as if the thought is an arrow, and the judgement is the shooting of the arrow from the bow, towards the world. There is a range of cases of things being such that the arrow hits the target, in which cases the thought is true, and a range of cases of things being such that it doesn't, in which cases the thought is false.

But "Things being as they are is things being such that *p*" is also a paraphrase of the thought, and so it can, like what it paraphrases, be entertained without taking it to be true. Thinking of the paraphrase in this second way, it adds nothing to the thought, but merely spells it out in a different way. We would still need to assert it in order to draw the relation which it is supposed to spell out. But then of course we'd be asserting the very same thought as when we simply say, "Sid smokes." So one could think of the paraphrase as an attempt to capture, in the form of a merely apparent contribution to the content, the contribution that is made by attaching assertoric force to the content. The paraphrase thus fails to do exactly what "is true" fails to do according to Frege—naturally, because it is Travis's attempt to unfold the concept of truth.

2 One might think that if a form of words does not yet indicate the

force, at least it displays the content. The content is just what would be in common between the same form of words employed one time as a question, another time as an assertion. Standardly Frege is read as showing a certain intimacy between the way a sentence is composed out of words, and the way a thought can be analysed as being composed out of concepts. And this is certainly one strand of Frege's philosophy. But Frege also thinks of language as something psychological, which can, at times, even get in the way of the logical. Language is the only means we have of displaying a thought in visible or audible form, or as Frege at one point puts it crudely but revealingly, of inducing someone, by means of a causal chain, to grasp a thought: "One communicates a thought. How does this happen? One brings about changes in the outside world which, perceived by another person, are supposed to induce him to apprehend a thought and take it to be true." (Frege 1918: 310) The thing we thus try to get across is, in itself, invisible, inaudible, and independent of language. Though human beings can only think in language, maybe some other being (angels?) might do better.[50] Travis develops this strand of Frege in order to argue that a thought is, in itself, a structureless whole.

We already saw that a thought has to be something outside the realm of actuality. "A thought is something immaterial," Frege writes, "and everything perceivable by the senses is excluded from the realm of

50 "[T]hat a thought of which we are conscious is connected in our mind with some sentence or other is necessary for us humans. But that does not lie in the nature of the thought, but in our own nature. There is no contradiction in supposing there to exist beings that can grasp the same thought as we do without needing to clad it in a form which can be perceived by the senses. But still, for us humans there is this necessity." (Frege, PW: 269)

things for which truth even so much as comes into question." (Frege 1918: 292) That is, nothing that one can take in by the senses can be the ultimate bearer of a truth value, although it can have one in a secondary sense, parasitically, so to say, on a thought. Let me explain Frege's argument roughly as Travis does. Something sensible – a picture, a spoken or written sentence – can be understood as representing things as some way, and understood in that way, it may be true or false. But it can be so understood in any out of many ways, depending on what would be reasonable under the circumstances, for instance because of the intentions of the author. "Paint patterns cannot teach us how a canvas represents things." (Travis 2011: 230) So even if we think of the visible thing as something which can be true or false, its truth value is not determined solely by the world it answers to, but also by how it is to be understood. One and the same visible thing, as visible thing, can be understood in a variety of ways. But on an occasion, we may be able to understand it as representing things in such a way that whether things are so - as thus represented - depends solely on how things are. We then understand the visible thing as expressing a thought.

When we understand a picture as representing, say, a cathedral as being situated on an island, this can always be expressed more transparently in a sentence: "The cathedral is situated on an island." So there seems to be something special about sentences; they are more intimately linked to the expression of thoughts than other visible or audible things (naturally, that is what sentences are for). "The thought, in itself immaterial, clothes itself in the material garment of a sentence and thereby becomes graspable for us. We say that the sentence expresses a thought." (Frege 1918: 292) By using the sentence, "It is raining," in the

familiar way that it is used, in the right circumstances, one asserts the thought that it is raining. Which thought that is will depend on the circumstances; in particular, on when and where one says it. It may seem that the intimacy of sentence and thought mitigates the invisibility of the latter. And it would, if we were to follow this strand of Frege's thinking.

But Frege also sometimes suggests that language is something merely psychological, a way of presenting thoughts to ourselves or others, not internal to what the thought is as such. Travis takes this second strand of Frege's thinking very seriously. He invokes Frege's context principle to argue that a thought is, as such, a structureless whole. A thought is defined by when it would be true, which Travis reads as, when the world (things being as they are) would be such that the thought is true. Only on an analysis, on some way of reading structure into the thought, can we think of its truth as turning on how some element of the world is, and whether it is some way for an element of the world to be. But there are endlessly many ways of doing this. For any one thought, there are endlessly many structures we can read into it, and for any one structure, there are endlessly many thoughts it can, on an occasion, express. Sometimes, "There is tea on the table," may be a way of saying that there is fresh tea in the pot on the table, sometimes that there is tea spilled on the table, sometimes that there are tea bags on the table (see Travis 2008 for better examples). The way we partition the thought, and thereby the world, is relative to our sensibilities and the purposes of the occasion. It is merely a way of presenting the thought to ourselves and others, not internal to what the thought is. Again, it is a way of presenting the thought in audible or visible form;

in itself, a thought is an abstract, structureless whole.

3 So Travis distinguishes between a thought as apprehended in words, and the thought as it is in itself. And I do not want to challenge the idea - which seems right to me - that any one thought can be expressed in indefinitely many ways, depending on the occasion, and any one expression can, depending on the occasion, express an indefinite variety of thoughts. We can know that a thought as expressed in one way on one occasion is the same as what is said in a different way on a different occasion. But that does not mean that in philosophy we have to rise above all possible occasions and form a conception of a thought as it is in itself. There is something mysterious about that doctrine. Whenever we think a thought, express it in words, we apprehend it under some aspect. How then can we, in philosophy, talk about the thought as it is in itself? It seems this would require a radically different point of view than the one we normally take up in thinking. But surely philosophising is a form of thinking. When Travis says that the thought that the pig is snuffling is defined by when it would be true, it seems we can understand what he means. Whether it is true that the pig is snuffling depends on how things are; more specifically, on how the pig is; more specifically, on whether it is snuffling. But these specifications provide, according to Travis, a merely psychological perspective on when things would be so. But then how are we to form a conception of the purely logical thing? How are we to form a conception of "when things being as they are is a case of things being such that the pig is snuffling" if we are not allowed to understand this through our understanding of "when the pig is snuffling"? I do not see how we

can. If specifying is moving from the logical to the psychological, then nothing is introduced when the philosopher introduces the logical. We so far have no conception of a thought as Travis presents it. One could also say, more paradoxically, that a thought as it is in itself, when this is distinguished from a thought as thought, would be out of mind's reach, something unthinkable, and therefore not a thought. But this second way of putting the point requires throwing away the ladder at the end.[51]

But it seems to me that Travis does argue persuasively that there is no limit to the variety of thoughts that can be expressed by means of one and the same expression, and the variety of expressions which can be used to express one and the same thought. It seems only by means of an *ad hoc* decision could we select some one privileged structure as *the* structure that the thought has in itself. But in fact this is not the only way to avoid the doctrine of structureless thought. Travis moves from the premise that there is not one structure which a thought has in itself

51 Another example of this sideways-on perspective is the following. Travis introduces his thesis of occasion-sensitivity by giving examples of different occasions on which one would understand differently what it is for a leaf to be green, or for a pig to snuffle, and so on—what it is for things to be some way for things to be. (Travis 2008) But how are we supposed to understand *his* invocation of "a leaf's being green" and so on? Does he here speak of a way for a thing to be on no understanding of what it would be for something to be that way? That would make no sense. A completely indeterminate understanding? That would contradict the thesis. It seems that he introduces his thesis of occasion-sensitivity from the only context that is supposed to be free of occasion-sensitivity: the philosophical. (Sid and Pia are locked in time — Charles is not.)

to the conclusion that in itself a thought is structureless. We might be inclined to deny the premise, and conclude that in itself a thought has one essential structure. I would rather deny the hidden assumption behind both, really the core of the Fregean doctrine, that there is such a thing as a thought in itself apart from the thought as thought (asserted). One and the same thought can be expressed in many ways, but given some discursive point of view, we can regard the thought as structured according to the way we would express it from that point of view – even if under different circumstances we would express the same thought differently, and then regard the same thought as structured differently. We can form a conception of a thought as the same expressed one way or another, but that does not mean that we have a conception of a thought as expressed in no way.

§4 Scheme-content dualism

On Travis's view, to analyse the thought, to view it under some structure, is also to partition the world, to view *it* under some structure. Not just the thought, but also the world, is, in itself, a structureless whole (in the sense of conceptual structure) – and these are two sides of the same coin. This, the idea that the world is in itself independent of the way we structure it in language, is the first thesis in the introduction. It is motivated by a combination of two types of concerns: Travis combines Frege's anti-psychologism with a dualism of scheme and content inspired by Austin and others: “a thought's generality is also a scheme for partitioning the world.” (Travis 2013: 2)

In one way this combination is natural. Travis exploits the structure of

Frege's view in order to keep everything that is psychological away from the order of being true. He is more interested than Frege was in the ways in which linguistic phenomena are relative to our human constitution, and the discursive purposes of the occasion; but he exploits the room Frege already made for this. It is relative to our culture and biology, and the purposes of the occasion, which shapes in the conceptual we pick out; but that there is such a thing to think, such a way for things to be, and that it reaches to the historical in the way that it does, is independent of us. This is, in broad outline, the story of Travis's *Objectivity and the Parochial*.

But the core Austinian insight could not be more alien to Frege. (Travis used to emphasise this.) One can fail to say something even so much as false without failing to say something at all. In order to say something either true or false, a certain fit or harmony is required between the shape of the concepts used, the occasion of using them, and the particular case to which they are applied. This fit is a human achievement, fully within the scope of rational assessment. That things are either so or not so is itself something that might fail to be so. Therefore, the conceptual schemes we employ are answerable to how things are (Travis 2008: 162):

> To represent things as a certain way is to impose, or deploy, a particular scheme for categorizing things being as they are: their being that way places them in the one category, their not in the other. It is open to the world to oblige such representing by articulating into things being the way in question, or things not; or, again, to fail so to oblige.

Travis thus opposes what Jean-Philippe Narboux has insightfully iden-

tified as the Harmony Fallacy: "this idea that the harmony between words and world is an all-or-nothing matter that conditions, and therefore falls outside of the scope of, assessment." (Narboux 2011: 206) To commit the Harmony Fallacy is to construe thinking something truth-evaluable as a preparation for thinking something (taking a stance)—a separate act which, in a logical sense, has to be achieved first. Since it comes before thinking something, it falls outside the scope of rational evaluation: it is not something for which one can be held responsible, but merely a matter of being given the thought. Judgement is parsed into a passive moment of receiving a thought, understood as a yes-no question, and an active moment of saying yes or no to it. Put like this, the Harmony Fallacy is just another name for Frege's separation of force and content. To oppose it, as Austin does, is to oppose the most central thing in Frege's philosophy.

Why is the Harmony Fallacy a fallacy? Austin argues as follows. There are many ways of going wrong besides falsehood. Truth and falsehood constitute one dimension along which to assess what we say, but there are others. Given the importance that this remark has for Travis, it is worth quoting in full (Austin 1950: 124):

> We say, for example, that a certain statement is exaggerated or vague or bald, a description somewhat rough or misleading or not very good, an account rather general or too concise. In cases like these it is pointless to insist on deciding in simple terms whether the statement is "true or false." Is it true or false that Belfast is north of London? That the galaxy is the shape of a fried egg? That Beethoven was a drunkard? That Wellington won the battle of Waterloo? There are various *degrees and dimensions* of success in making statements: the statements fit the facts always more or less loosely, in different

ways on different occasions for different intents and purposes.

Austin gives examples of statements which may, depending on the occasion and the way things are, not be apt enough even so much as to be evaluable as true or false. But seeing that this is so is itself a case of rational evaluation, not separate from the act of judgement. One cannot decide on the aptness of words used to describe a particular case before deciding on the truth of what is thus said. Finding the right words to say what one wants to say, and meaning what one says, are two aspects of one and the same activity. So Austin does not simply call for disqualifying the statements in question as meaningless or empty. There is still something to evaluate, but we must resist a simple yes-no answer to whether these statements are true or false. They may not be *flatly* true nor *flatly* false, but one or the other on some further specification, or some further determination of the circumstances of speaking.

I take this to be an insight, one which can be accommodated without a dualism of scheme and content. But it is not hard to see how the insight can motivate such a dualism. Broadly speaking, if which words one should use depends not only on the object of description, but also on the perspective we take on things, a perspective parochial one way or another (merely human, or merely for specific purposes), then it would, it seems, "slight the independence of reality" to say that the world is structured in terms of those words. So we are led to stand back from any parochial perspective and conceive of the world as what is seen from nowhere. We thus conceive of the world as a thing in itself, somehow behind or underneath the way it appears in language.

In the work of Austin this idea comes to expression as follows. In say-

ing what makes it true to say something, we must, he thinks, stand back from the words used, since it is just the aptness of those words which is under evaluation. Standing back from them, "prising the words off the world", Austin defines truth in terms of two types of relations, a demonstrative relation between a statement and a state of affairs, and a descriptive relation between a sentence and a "type"—which Austin then again explains in terms of sufficient likeness to paradigmatic instances. The general picture is one of reality as hanging together according to relations of resemblance, which allows for both demonstrations and conventions to get a hold on reality, so that there can be relations between statements and the world (116):

> A statement is said to be true when the historic state of affairs to which it is correlated by the demonstrative conventions (the one to which it 'refers') is of a type with which the sentence used in making it is correlated by the descriptive conventions.

Note the similarity with Travis's definition (indeed, "the historical" is so-called because of Austin). And as Travis tells us nothing about where one particular case ends and the rest of the world begins, so Austin (as Strawson noted) tells us nothing more about states of affairs. I suggest this is because "the particular case," and, "the state of affairs," though at first introduced as elements of the world, are really meant to refer to the world without relying on any conceptual scheme, any way of partitioning it one way or another a these terms are really meant to refer to the world as such.

Travis continues and transforms this line of thought in original ways. He develops further and more systematically the ways in which the

shape of our concepts, and how we understand them on the occasion, is determined by "our parochial sensibilities": as human thinkers, we have a non-rule-like, not-fully-articulable sense for how words are to be understood on an occasion, and when it is relevant to say what. But the point, for Travis, extends beyond words. Even what words speak of, ways for things to be, "admit of understandings." The words "is a pig", used as what they are for in English, speak of being a pig, a way for a thing to be. There are indefinitely many ways of understanding what it is for something to be that way. On one understanding, a peccary may count, but not on another. One one understanding, a piece of meat would count, but not on another. For any way for things to be, it is an occasion-sensitive matter when things would count as being that way.

It takes a parochial capacity to tell both how a way for things to be is to be understood on the present occasion (what the reach is of what is said, and so which thought is expressed), and whether this case of things being as they are can count as a case of things being so (whether the world instances this thought). This capacity goes beyond anything that we can spell out. A rule would only give us more of the conceptual, not a way of relating the conceptual to the historical. Travis finds this conception of thought in Descartes's *Discourse on the Method*, and refers to the relevant sense of a thinker as a "Cartesian thinker". Let me quote a striking passage, if only because it is, to my mind, Travis at his best (316):

'Reason', Hilary Putnam wrote, 'can transcend whatever it can survey'. Such is Descartes' idea. Take any implementable theory of how to do such-and-such—a theory with definite predictions as to the thing to do when faced with such a task. A Cartesian thinker is always prepared to recognize ways of

performing the task other than those the theory dictates; moreover, to recognize whether such a new way, and not the theory's, would be the thing to do —and whether the task itself is a thing to do. We, but not swallows, can recognize when old ways of building mud nests, or times for building them, are not best. Our sensitivity to the world's bearing on the thing for us to do is, unlike theirs, unbounded in this sense.

We will later see that this conception of reason allows Travis to give content to the idea that perception is logically, even if not psychologically or temporally, prior to taking a stance on how things are. It is natural that Descartes's idea should be invoked here, because it is precisely meant to draw the line between what we share with other animals, such as our sensory apparatus, and what we can do that they can't: improvise in the face of novel circumstances. Travis thinks that this second capacity marks us off as thinkers in a demanding sense.

Moreover, Travis thinks this is not merely a feature of us, but in some way pervades the nature of thought itself. For this to be in accord with his anti-psychologism requires him to walk something of a tightrope. On the one hand, it takes being human to assess how a way for things to be, as spoken of by someone on an occasion, is to be understood for present purposes; that is, when things would count as being that way. Likewise, it takes being human to assess whether this case, here and now, of things being as they are can count as falling within this range. So one might think that the parochial determines the shape of the conceptual: it determines the shape of the thoughts which we can think. But that might seem to be in contradiction with the idea that a thought is defined by its reach. It is intrinsic to any thought to reach to the historical in the way that it does. If it did not so reach, it would, *per*

impossibile, not be *this* thought. "[O]ne may interpret an assertion in taking it to be the expression of this or that thought, but one cannot interpret a thought." (Travis 2011: 9) So Travis does not think of our parochial sensibility as determining the shape of thoughts, but rather as selecting thoughts of a certain shape[52], thoughts which are anyway there to be thought.[53] Our parochial sensibility, and the purposes of the occasion, can make it the case that words and what they speak of (ways for things to be) are to be understood in a certain way. The words by themselves, meaning what they do, being used for what they are for, do not determine how they are to be understood. This is an elaboration of Frege's idea that a sentence by itself does not determine a question of truth.

This calls for a slight correction to the theory of truth which I ascribed to Travis before. Instead of, "For it to be true that *p* is for things being as they are to be a case of things being such that *p*," we should write, "For

52 "The parochial selects for us ways for us to represent things to be. That need not be for it to operate on any given such way so as to decide when things would be like that. One could say correctly: 'The parochial shapes what would count as things being such that F (though not whether things being as they are is things being F— something decided just by how things are). But this can just mean: the parochial fixes what it is we mention, what one speaks of, in speaking of F—how talk of 'being F' is to be understood. It need not be seen as deciding, of what we in fact speak of, how that reaches. All of this can be seen as no more than grammar.

"This idea guides this whole collection." (Travis 2011: 19)

53 That they are anyway there to be thought is a feature of the world: "Had evolution omitted sloths, there would be no such thing as judging that sloths like bananas." (Travis 2011: 264)

it to be true that *p* is for things being as they are to *count, for present purposes, as* a case of things being such that *p*." That adjustment shows an additional reason Travis has for drawing apart thought and world in the way that he does. His relational conception of truth makes room for the parochial and occasion-sensitivity. It allows for incorporating the idea that the shape of our thinking is relative to (though not determined by) our human sensibilities and the discursive purposes of the occasion, without thereby turning truth itself, or the world itself, into something relative to us.

Travis offers a form of "conceptual relativity" (Putnam 1991: 190) which stops short of the whole, both of the whole thought, and of the world as a whole. The whole is the way it is independently of us. But in thinking and expressing thoughts we partition it one way or another.[54] The way

54 "Selecting" thoughts is also a matter of carving up the stance someone takes into particular stances. "The stance" someone takes has to be understood in a way analogous to "the way things are" - it is, in itself, infinitely particular: "Any thinker at a time exposes himself to risk of error. He is exposed to the error he is. He sets his course, or is prepared to, as he does, or is; there are countless ways for him to go awry. One arrives at the lecture hall at four o'clock to discover that the lecture was at three, or is in the basement, or is not the lecture one expected—had one but known, he would have stayed in bed. Such are among the myriad disappointments a given thinker, at a time, exposes himself to suffering." (Travis 2013: 250)

In representing someone as taking a certain stance, ascribing beliefs to him, we partition the stance he takes into individual stances: his thinking that the lecture was at four o'clock, on the first floor, on ethology, and so on: "For a thinker to think a particular thing there is to think—that things are such-and-such way—is for his exposure to error to articulate in a particular way,

we partition the whole is partly dependent on the world and partly on us. The world may allow for a certain way of speaking by articulating into things being that way and things being not that way. What is possible is determined by what is actual. But that we partition the world in this way, group these possible cases together (that is, select this thought), is due to our interests and sensibilities. And so in that sense the structure does not belong to the world as such. It is a way of partitioning reality, one way among others, none *the* way to partition reality. In itself, the historical is a structureless whole. The phrase "things being as they are" may be heard as "things as they are in themselves, not as they appear to us in language."

This becomes clearer once we consider the rule-following problematic, which is also one of Travis's main motivations. (Travis 2006) There is no limit to the variety of cases which we can be confronted with. Being Cartesian thinkers, we can improvise in the face of novel circumstances, and assess, for a novel case, whether this can count as a case of things being thus and so. What determines whether our assessment is correct? Not a rule, according to Travis. A rule, or any other bit of the conceptual, can only show us relations between bits of the conceptual. It cannot show how the conceptual reaches to the historical. The same would hold for anything that we can spell out in words, exactly because judgement, on the present conception, is a matter of assessing how what words say relates to the world. What makes a particular judgement correct or incorrect is, in one sense, nothing: it is intrinsic to the

for there to be a certain discernible pattern in the way he is liable to disappointment, or to escaping it." (Travis 2011: 250) Maybe then, corresponding to "the way things are," there is such a thing as "the thought" which in thinking we partition into thoughts.

thought to reach as it does. But for any case of someone representing something as being some way, there is the question of how to understand this representation, and the answer to this question is determined by what is the thing for one to do. So in another sense, whether this case can count as a case of things being as they were represented to be is determined by what, given our sensibilities and interests, would be reasonable.

The problem is now as follows. If we go by the minimal answer, Travis's view faces the same problem that Frege did. If it intrinsic to the thought to reach as it does, then how can there be this distance between the thought and what it reaches to? Would it not be equally intrinsic to things being as they are to be a case of things being so? Surely it wouldn't be this particular case if it did not fall under the generalities that it does. But then what makes the thought true is not things being as they are generically, but more specifically, that things are so. We are left with nothing to give substance to the sense that there must be a relation, and so some kind of distance, between what is said and what determines the truth of what is said.

The second answer offers a more substantial conception. But taken as an answer to the rule-following problematic, it would be a wrong answer. Parochial agreement would determine whether this case of things being as they are counts as a case of things being as they were represented to be. Judgement better be in touch with the reason why. So when I want to judge whether this can count as a snuffling pig I really want to know what people would agree on. But people generally agree for a reason. Specifically, they would agree that this case can count because it does. Judgement is not in general like acting according

to etiquette. It is not in general a matter of doing what *one* is to do. Rather, what one is to do is itself determined by the facts. What makes it correct for me to think that the fork goes on the left side of the plate is that this is the thing people do, since this is the kind of fact that is determined by communal agreement. But what in general makes it correct to judge something – say, that there is this knife here – is that there is, in fact, this knife here. Our thinking answers to the facts. By placing the world beyond the facts, Travis can tell a story about the relation between the shape of facts, human interests and sensibilities, and the world. But this story is the wrong answer to what thinking answers to. Parochial agreement comes to seem bare agreement. What goes missing is that when we agree, we agree for a reason, and when we are right to agree, we agree because that is the way things are.

I do believe that there is something deeply right in the ideas of occasion-sensitivity, the parochial, and "reason transcends whatever it can survey". Travis takes up the suggestions of his predecessors and shows, with remarkable depth and clarity, how they can find their place in a systematic philosophy. I regret not being able to do full justice to this side of his writing. My objection is only to the dualistic metaphysics which he thinks is needed to accommodate these ideas. A rejection of the Harmony Fallacy need not come together with a dualism of scheme and content. Just because thoughts have presuppositions, so that what we say can fail to be even so much as false (a yes-no question can fail to have a yes-no answer), does not mean we have to stand back from these presuppositions when we want to say how the thought stands to reality. We can think of the presuppositions as constituting the standpoint of thinking the thought. The lesson to learn from these sort of

reflections is that we cannot say how the proposition stands to reality from another standpoint, a sideways-on point of view. We can only exploit the standpoint of the thought itself, by using it to say when it would be true: it is true to say that the pig is snuffling because the pig is, in fact, snuffling. Yes, the truth of the thought depends on things being as they are; but more specifically, it depends on the pig's being as it is; more specifically again, it depends on whether the pig is snuffling.

That to Travis seems a form of idealism, and we can see how these considerations may re-enforce that suspicion. But even if the shape of our thinking is determined, in some way, by parochial sensibilities and occasional interests, that does not need to mean that we cannot find these same shapes in the world around us. It is not, of course, that our biology and culture in general creates the circumstances our thinking answers to (though it determines some of them), but it opens our eyes to facts which are anyway there. It may be surprising to note that this idea, though defended maybe most forcefully by McDowell, is also central to the work of Travis. We find it in the idea that parochial sensibilities do not shape the thoughts we think, but enable us to think thoughts which are anyway there to think. But given such an objective conception of conceptual shape, what could be the further objection to thinking of the world as conceptually shaped?

§5 Naïve realism

1 For this we must turn to Travis's account of perception. It is undeniable that for any empirical thought, there are many ways for things to be so (in contrast to the mathematical case). Travis pictures

this in terms of the metaphor of something particular falling under something general. He seems to take it to be almost self-evident that only what is particular can be visible, not the range to which it belongs. To judge that the sky is blue is to group together what is present, what can be seen, with what is currently not present: other possible cases of blue skies. Nor is the standard present to which they all live up. There is something persuasive about this way of thinking. But it smuggles in that the sky's *belonging* to this range, its *being* blue, would also be invisible. In fact, Travis hears "its being blue" as referring to an episode of the sky's being blue, itself conceived as an object of awareness like the sky; its *being* blue, for Travis, is not what one apprehends when one apprehends that the sky *is* blue. These would have to be two different senses, or at least understandings, of what it is to be some way. So it seems to Travis that it cannot be perceived that the sky is blue. But we have yet to see why.

At the heart of Travis's view lies a realist conviction: thought answers to how things are; the role of perception is to give us that to which thought answers; only in response do we take a stance on how things are (Travis 2013: 31):

> [*P*]*erception*, as such, simply places our surroundings in view; affords us awareness of them. There is no commitment to their *being* one way or another. It confronts us with what is there, so that, by attending, noting, recognizing, and otherwise exercising what capacities we have, *we* may, in some respect or other, make out what is there for what it is—or, again, fail to. It makes us aware, to some extent, of things (around us) being as they are. It is then up to us to make out, or try to, which particular ways that is. Perception cannot present things as being other than they are. It cannot present some

way things are *not* as what is so. That would not be mere confrontation.

Perception confronts us with what is there. To be confronted with something is not already to take a stance on how it is. We cannot be given that things are thus and so; we must judge that things are thus and so on the basis of what is given. So Travis thinks that one cannot *see*, in the sense of visual awareness, that the sky is blue, that one coin is larger than another, that it is raining outside, or that a pig is snuffling around the roots below. He will of course acknowledge that we use the expression "seeing that", and that we use it correctly the way that we do, but he claims that this should not be understood in the sense of visual awareness. It is not a mere receptive achievement. To "see that things are thus and so" is really to tell that things are thus and so on the basis of seeing things (Travis, forthcoming c):

[A]wareness-that is not *access* to how things are. It is not a channel through which to *learn* anything as to this. It is responding to what one has access to in registering something as to how things are.

So there can be no truth or falsehood in perception: it confronts us with what determines whether our thoughts are true or false, but only what we think in response can be true or false. In this way Travis rejects the common conviction that things can be, or fail to be, in accordance with a perceptual experience; they would fail to be so when the experience is an illusion. According to Travis, illusions arise not because perception fails to bring our surroundings into view, but because we go wrong in our response. Some things may look misleading, but if we go astray, this is because we are prone to respond wrongly to the look they in fact have, and which perception makes available to us. Travis traces this

back to Descartes's solution to the problem of error in the fourth *Meditation*. There Descartes explains the possibility of making mistakes by distinguishing between two faculties, the intellect or understanding, which merely perceives ideas, and cannot do so falsely (and so also not truly), and the will, which affirms or denies ideas. Mistakes arise because "my will extends farther than my understanding". Applied to perception as Travis does, this becomes the view that perception itself is entirely neutral, not yet a matter of taking a stance, and so neither true nor false. In response we take a stance, and thus expose ourselves to risk of error.[55]

This provides one explanation for Travis's move. Schematically speaking, whatever the thinking subject contributes in responding to what is given cannot already have been there in what is given. If it is only in response that we bring things under concepts, then what is there cannot already be conceptually shaped. At first one might think that what is there, what is given, are material objects and the ways they are. But if perception is mere confrontation, these, though they are there, cannot be given as the objects which they are. For me to have a pig in view is not already for me to judge that there is a pig there. Just so, for me to have its snuffling in view is not already for me to judge that it is snuffling. What is given to me is not the particular case of the snuffling pig as such—not as a case of a pig's *snuffling,* nor even as a case of the *pig*'s

55 Travis quotes Frege, "By the step by which I win an environment I expose myself to risk of error." But really Travis thinks it is only in the next step that error can come about. "The step by which I win an environment," for Frege, is precisely the step from receiving sense impressions to seeing things. "To receive visual impressions is not to see things... Something non-sensible must be added." (Frege 1918: 308)

being as it is, but merely as a case of things (catholic sense) being as they are.

I have tried to explain Travis's move by means of the epistemological separation of empirical judgement into two separate acts. Parsing empirical judgement into two acts, two distinct forms of awareness, motivates a distinction between two distinct objects of awareness: the particular case, and a thought. But it may be a bit artificial to look for a priority either way. Given the epistemological separation, we can argue for the ontological separation as above. Given the ontological separation, we can argue for the epistemological separation as follows. A particular case is not the sort of thing one can know in the sense of knowing that things are thus and so (French *savoir).* It is rather the sort of thing one can know in the sense of acquaintance (French *connaître*). So perceptual awareness, in so far as it is receptive, cannot already be knowing that things are thus and so. It is mere acquaintance with what can be proof that things are thus and so, a conclusive ground for believing this. To be acquainted with this ground is unlike what we normally understand by being acquainted with a person. When you're acquainted with someone, you thereby know some things about the person – it is not enough merely to have met without knowing it. But on the relevant philosophical concept, acquaintance is in itself not yet knowledge. When one is acquainted with a particular case one will undoubtedly, simultaneously and psychologically inseparably, also know some things about it, but to know this is to bring what one is acquainted with under a generality, on the basis of the acquaintance, and so as a response to it. Given that what is there is not the sort of thing one can know, reception cannot be knowledge; knowledge adds something to

reception. Perception is logically, even if not always temporally or psychologically, prior to knowledge.

What does it mean for perception to be logically prior? We can understand this, as above, ontologically: what is given is the sort of thing one can be acquainted with, not the sort of thing one can know. But we can also understand it epistemologically: its being given is in a sense prior to our bringing it under a generality. In what sense? The answer Travis would give employs his notion of a Cartesian thinker, as explained above. Say that I have a certain routine for recognising snuffling pigs by sight and hearing. Immediately upon perceiving a snuffling pig I come to believe, in fact to know, that there is a snuffling pig before me. I do not deliberate on the basis of what I see whether this can count as a case of a snuffling pig. I do not articulate this knowledge to myself. Psychologically, one could say, my seeing and hearing the snuffling pig and my knowing that it is a snuffling pig are one. What makes them logically separate, according to Travis, is that I am prepared to step back from my routine should the occasion call for it. Say the farmer has told me that there is a strange pig virus going about, which causes the animals to uncontrollably contract their nostrils, make sniffing sounds, and root in the ground - behaviour which shouldn't be confused with snuffling. Following my ordinary routine, I would have said this is snuffling. But now in my ethological report (I am making observations) I will be careful not to classify it as such. To be able to step back in this way is what makes me a thinker. It is only because in the routine case I am already prepared to step back, should this be needed, that I am arriving at beliefs rationally, rather than merely being caused to believe what I will. That is to say, it is only because of this that they

count as beliefs at all. And it is just this that make even the routine belief formation logically posterior to perceptual awareness of the scene.

When we abstract away the judgements made in a perceptual experience, what remains is what Travis calls perception, mere access to our surroundings. Instead of "perception" Travis also often writes "our senses." He appropriates a metaphor of Austin's (Austin 1962: 11):

> [O]ur senses are dumb—though Descartes and others speak of 'the testimony of the senses', our senses do not *tell* us anything, true or false."

The point of the metaphor, for Travis, is that perception is not a matter of representation; to see things is not to represent things as being one way or another, nor to be represented to. This relies on construing perception as something our senses do for us (Travis 2013: 30):

> Our senses merely bring our surroundings into view; afford us some sort of awareness of them. It is then for us to make of what is in our view what we can, or do.

But it is odd to describe perception as something which our senses do for us, as if the senses are external to the subject. It may be true that the senses do not tell us anything, but the senses also do not *see*. *We* see, with our senses—not with the help of our senses, as I may be said to see with the help of my glasses. My glasses do some correcting for me, bringing together lightwaves in the appropriate locations of the retinas. The retinas do not do my seeing for me. They don't tell me

anything, because no part of me tells me anything.[56] So the fact that telling how things are is something I must do for myself, as Travis is right to emphasise, does not mean that it is external to perception. One would think that to see things - for things to be sensorily present to us - is to see how things are, for instance how the things in the surroundings are shaped and coloured, and spatio-temporally and causally arranged. This is, so to say, to have our feet in the world, to be in our surroundings; not waiting for them, not merely to have outsourced a task to the senses.

Travis seems to agree that awareness is not to outsource a task to the senses. But instead of concluding that perception is not something our senses do for us, he concludes, absurdly, that perception is not yet awareness. Perception merely affords awareness of how things are around us. "Sight *affords* awareness of what is before the eyes … . If it thus puts opportunities on offer, *enjoying* awareness would be taking these up." (Travis 2013: 11) On this view, even *seeing* has to be construed as a response to perception. "Searching the kitchen counter for my favourite knife, it might be 10 minutes before I finally see what was all along in plain view. Here seeing is registering." (Travis 2013: 11) Travis thinks of "seeing" in the sense of registering as a response to "seeing" understood so that it does not yet involve registering. The latter sense, which for Travis is perception properly so-called, is merely to have a scene in view, or merely having one's eyes open, not yet using them to *see* (if I may use "seeing" in the way which we ordinarily do). Nonethe-

56 Maybe I should add "*qua* part of me". The pain in my side may tell me that I have a problem, but now the pain has made my side something alien to me, something that detracts from the unity of the self.

less, Travis is not merely proposing a terminological change, using "perception" for what we would ordinarily call an opportunity for perception. What he calls perception is already supposed to be the moment of being given our surroundings, even if it is not yet awareness (it is just this which allows him to conceive what is given as devoid of generality). Given his starting assumptions, it is not surprising that he is led to the conclusion that perception is not yet awareness; what is surprising is that he does not regard this as a *reductio* of his assumptions.

Evidently there are deep philosophical pressures at work here. Unless Travis is misled by the English idiom "I can see" as a way of saying "I see," he is not merely observing how we speak about perception. We normally express our perceptual experiences in the active voice, with the perceiving subject in the grammatical subject position: "I see …". This is reflective of the fact that seeing is something we do, not something that merely happens to us. Though it is receptive, awareness of what is there, it is not passive in a way that would contrast with knowledge. Travis can only make it seem passive by moving the moment of reception so far back that it comes before seeing, as if reception were merely waiting around for the world to show up. But as long as we are waiting, the world is not given yet, and when it is given, we are not waiting around anymore. The moment of waiting around is just not the moment of being given the reason for a judgement, and so it cannot elucidate the character of this reason.

2 Now Travis is of course not alone in construing perception as

passive. Almost all philosophers describe perception as passive, in terms of being appeared to, or being represented to, or being confronted with our surroundings, or indeed being given something. Why? Or going back to the case at hand (this will throw light on the general predicament), why does Travis describe perception as something which our senses do for us? I mean to ask this question in a therapeutic spirit.

We may try to answer the question by ascribing to Travis a restricted conception of natural interactions. This would fit in with the diagnosis which John McDowell gives in *Mind and World* for why philosophers fall into the Myth of the Given. According to McDowell, the concept of nature - or what comes to the same, of causality - has undergone a restriction in our thinking since the rise of modern science. Under the restriction, there is supposed to be nothing to nature except what can be captured in natural-scientific terms, or understood in the way natural phenomena are understood in the natural sciences. Now perceptual experience is, in a sense, a "transaction in nature," a matter of our surroundings impinging themselves on our senses. And so it seems it has to be understood just like any natural phenomenon. An important special case of this is that we share our sensory apparatus with non-rational animals: we have to understand our case just as we would theirs in a biological or otherwise natural-scientific investigation. This would leave a philosopher with a dilemma. Either reason is special, not the sort of thing that is exhausted by natural-scientific description, and then perceptual experience cannot bear rationally on what we are to think and do; or it can, but this has to be understood as a mere causal interaction, on the model of making a dent in the clay tablet of the mind. McDowell argues that both options are hopeless.

Perceptual experience does bear rationally on what we think and do; it must, lest our thinking would be "spinning in a frictionless void." But rational bearing cannot be understood on the model of making a dent in the clay tablet of the mind, or generally in the way we understand things in natural science. Reason is governed by norms which exactly stay out of view from the standpoint of the natural sciences (this can even be seen as the point of clearly demarcating that standpoint in the way that the rise of modern science does). So if we want to think of perceptual experience as reason-giving, we have to make room for a form of causal interaction which is special, one that is at once receptive, a matter of our surroundings impinging themselves on our senses, and an expression of our rational agency, an actualisation of our capacity for understanding.

McDowell seems to have designed his diagnosis on the model of the pressures visible in the work of C.I. Lewis, Wilfrid Sellars, and Donald Davidson. But in recent years McDowell has accused Travis of falling into the Myth of the Given, and so maybe we can apply the diagnosis here as well. We should then say that Travis takes the second horn of the dilemma: he conceives of perception as "forming images on retinas," and something our senses do for us, therefore as non-conceptual, and nonetheless it is supposed to bear rationally on what we are to think and do. That does seem to be so. So given McDowell's diagnosis, we can explain why Travis falls into the Myth of the Given. But in fact, Travis is hardly concerned at all with the nature of causal interactions, except for just the same reasons as McDowell is: to oppose a reduction of rationality to a mere object of natural-scientific description. He opposes such a reduction in very similar ways deeply inspired by

McDowell. Nor is he much concerned with the continuity of nature, or the similarities between humans and other animals, except again for the purpose of demarcating just the discontinuity that is also of concern to McDowell: the capacity of human animals to step back from routines and evaluate them in the light of reason. Travis does conclude that the difference does not lie in perceptual experience, but in the way we respond to ita but that is a result of his view, not the motivation for it. Even if he would be under a restricted conception of nature (I see no reason to think that he is), this is not his reason for construing perception as something which our senses do for us.

More generally it cannot be the deep reason why philosophers fall into the Myth of the Given. It is merely one form of the Myth. One form of the Myth is the view that in perceptual experience a chain of causal interactions (understood as one would in natural science) leads, so to say, up unto the doorstep of the mind, where the mind picks it up and employs it as a justification for a belief. McDowell is right to say that this would be to offer "exculpations where what we wanted was justifications." (McDowell 1994: 8) But more generally the Myth is the generalised form of the Cartesian/Fregean view — the idea that there can be a completely neutral form of awareness, a way of examining the object of awareness while standing at a distance from it. To be aware of something in this way is not yet to commit oneself to its *being* one way or another. And thus awareness and being are drawn apart. Something is laid down on the doorstep of the mind; in response we pick it up. Since picking up is only done in response, the foundling is construed as lying still. In the intellectual version of this structure in Descartes's fourth *Meditation*, what is given is an idea. And since it is only in

response that we judge that the idea is true or false, the idea does not have affirmation or denial inherent to it.

McDowell himself, who offers modern philosophy a way of undoing the restriction on the concept of nature, nonetheless falls into the general form of the Myth of the Given, as I argue in other chapters. There is of course a glaring difference with Travis's view: McDowell thinks the world itself, as it is given in experience, is already conceptually structured. Travis is more impressed with the concrete particularity of the sensible world, and the way in which this contrasts with a thought, as we have to conceive it within the Fregean paradigm. He is also impressed (rightly, I think) by a different line of thought which goes against the Fregean paradigm, the idea that even so much as to think falsely requires a commitment to things' being one way or another. This would mean that even so much as to be under the appearance that things are thus and so requires taking a stance, and so cannot be the neutral form of awareness that they both think perception must be. But despite their differences, they share the Fregean paradigm, and what comes with it, the basic structure of presentation and response which they think is needed in order to avoid "slighting the independence of reality." (McDowell 1994: 27-8)

So the deepest root of our current predicament is this structure of passive presentation and active response itself. The modern conception of objectivity, of realism, requires that perception, in so far as it is a receptive achievement, is a neutral form of awareness, involving no commitment to things being one way or another. The role of perception is merely to afford access to what thought answers to, so that we can judge *for ourselves*. If to have access to reality were already to see

things as being one way or another, perception would be prejudiced, depriving us of the freedom to make up our own mind. Access has to be a neutral meeting point, which is provided by the senses, part of the world in one sense, part of the subject in another. The senses thus function as a window upon our surroundings. In response, we look through this window by "making out what is there." Here looking through the window is not a metaphor for looking or seeing, but rather for *telling* how things are on the basis of seeing.

§6 Out of reach

The above is a direct argument against Travis's theory of perception. It is also an indirect argument against his conception of what is given, and thereby, his theory of truth. If what is given is "things being as they are," distinguished from things one can think of, being ways one can truly think they are, then awareness of it has to be, in so far as it is receptive, mere acquaintance, and Travis himself is led to construe this as coming before awareness. But then it is just not the moment of being given our surroundings. Travis construes what is given in such a way that it cannot be given.

But my correction to the Cartesian paradigm is easily misheard. Like McDowell, I say that experience must already be conceptually shaped, lest it does not bear rationally on what we are to think and do. To Travis, this seems to express a restricted conception of reason's reach. (Travis 2013: 118-143, forthcoming a, forthcoming c) It is as if we are saying that there is something reason cannot do: it cannot engage immediately with the non-conceptual. The non-conceptual must first

be conceptualised, brought under generalities, before it can bear on what one is to think and do. But then this work of conceptualising cannot itself be a rational task. If experience were already conceptualised, the perceiving subject would be deprived of the freedom to judge for herself whether things being as they are can count as falling under such and such generalities. So, Travis concludes, the idea that experience must be "already conceptually shaped" is just a mistake. Instead of saddling experience with content, we better reject the dogma that reason can only engage with something of conceptual shape.

But that, of course, is not what I am saying. I am not saying that there is something that reason cannot do: judging how things are on the basis of acquaintance with things being as they are. Rather, only an illusion of sense, a philosophical illusion, can make it seem that we even have a "something" in mind when we speak of acquaintance with things being as they are. This was supposed to be a form of awareness, but when we thought through the idea, it turned out to be no form of awareness (as even Travis admits). Moreover, when I reject this idea of acquaintance I am also rejecting a conception of the object of awareness as non-conceptual. To argue that experience must already be conceptually shaped, that it is a matter of finding a conceptual form enmattered in the here and now, is a way of arguing that the conceptual form can be right there before our eyes. That is also what McDowell meant to argue by means of "saddling experience with content," although that formulation distracts from the insight. Travis's response just shows how difficult it is to dislodge the conviction that what we can express in words must be removed from the sensible world.

We can also argue against that conviction directly, by showing that the

alternative, a conception of truth as a relation between a thought and what is given, makes no sense. Now in order to see that, it is important to reject an understanding of the instancing relation which does not satisfy the ambitions inherent to the picture. Particular cases are first introduced as elements of the world. Thinking of a particular case as a thing in the world, the generality it is brought under is an element of the thought: just as in thinking that Sid is smoking, one brings Sid under the concept of smoking, so in thinking that the particular case is such that Sid is smoking, one brings the particular case under the concept of being a case of Sid's smoking. This shift from ordinary objects of reference to particular cases is as pointless as it is harmless. It does not serve Travis's purposes. The problem is that a particular case is just another type of thing to refer to. Thought answers to how things are. So conceiving particular cases as elements of the world, thought would answer to how they are. The world would be, not the particular case, but how particular cases are, and this is still, on Travis's terms, something within the conceptual. One can say how a particular case is, as Travis does say: “Things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes.” But Travis does not want the world to be made up of the kind of thing one can say. And if we anyway are going to have a conception of the world as within the conceptual, there would obviously be no point in having it be how particular cases are, rather than just how things are.

Travis wants to think of the world as made up of what we think about, not of what we can truly think. But he also wants to think of the world as how things are, that which determines whether a thought is true or false. So he needs to think of “how things are” as an object one can

think about, not something one can itself express in words. In the sense in which "how things are" is what determines whether a thought is true or false, and is what is given in perception, one cannot *say* how things are. And conversely, in the sense in which one can say how things are, one cannot see it—that things are thus and so cannot be given in perception. This inexpressible but perceptible object is what "the particular case of things being as they are" is supposed to be. So the world, as Travis wants to conceive it, is not how the particular case is (not that things being as they are is a case of things being such and such), but: the particular case. A philosophy according to which the world is thinkable, sayable, would confine reason within the conceptual.

If we accept Travis's view, we should conclude that truth does not lie in a relation between a thought and the world, but in the worldly *relatum*: things being as they are. What makes it true to think that the pig is snuffling lies outside of the thought. Whether the thought is true depends all on what is before my eyes when I'm looking at the pig, and what is before my eyes, according to Travis, is things being as they are. So what Travis should want to say is, "It is true that *p* because: things being as they are". He should want to point at the ultimate reason why the thought is true. It can only be pointing, because the reason itself must be, given the current pressures, the sort of thing one can only think about, not the sort of thing one can think.[57]

But pointing to something, referring to something, is done within the context of a proposition, within the context of saying how it is. It so far makes no sense to say, "It is true that *p* because: that." We could make it

57 Compare McDowell 1994: 9.

grammatical by saying, “It is true that *p* because of things being as they are.” But what does it mean to say this? One *can* say, “It is true that the train is late because of how the tracks are,” but this cries out for a specification: more specifically, because the tracks are in need of repair. The specification takes the form of a full proposition. Similarly, one can point at a thing in order to draw attention to it, but this is best seen as a preparation for saying something about it. So to say, “It is true that *p* because of things being as they are,” is merely a generic way of preparing the way for a more specific explanation of the truth of *p*. But this more specific explanation will again take propositional form. It would take the form of saying *how* things are. But if we say how the particular case must be in order for the thought to be true, we will resort to the instancing relation again, and we already saw that this should not satisfy Travis's ambitions.

Now Travis is not in fact tempted to take up this point of view in his philosophy. It is rather the point of view which he ascribes to us in everyday life. According to Travis, in perceptual experience we are acquainted with things being as they are; but to be thus acquainted is not as such to know anything about it. We thus have a form of awareness of things which is not awareness that they are thus and so. This is an everyday analogue of “pointing at the ultimate ground”. In his philosophy, however, Travis thinks we can take up a different point of view, one from which we can draw a relation between the conceptual and the historical. Even though in life we would say, “Sid smokes,” from the point of view taken up in Travis's philosophy this is to be paraphrased as, “Things being as they are is a case of things being such that Sid smokes.” We already saw that this expression is unsatisfactory

if “things being as they are” is one more thing to refer to, an element in the world. But Travis wants it to be the world, so that the generality it is brought under, “things being such that Sid smokes,” is outside the world. We so to say hold the world in left hand, and the thought in the other, and relate them from this point of view.

But now there is the same “sideways on” problem that, as I argued before, is inherent to the Fregean paradigm. The thought is taken to be a concept of a way for the world to be (as for Frege it was first a subject, of which truth can be predicated, and later a name, which can refer to the True). To assert the thought is to say that the world is that way. But then the thought is not the sort of thing that can be said. I can only say that things being as they are is a case of things being such that it is raining; I cannot say that it is raining. Of course, there is something which Travis would call “saying that it is raining”, but what this really means is: saying that things being as they are is a case of things being such that it is raining. From the sideways-on perspective from which the paraphrase is given, “things being such that it is raining”, which is supposed to be what the thought is, is only an element of a thought, and so not itself the kind of thing that can be said or thought. What can be said or thought is that things being as they are is a case of things being such that it is raining. But wait a minute, that is the same thought again (in Frege: wait a minute, “is true” adds nothing to the thought) – and the problem repeats itself. I cannot think that things being as they are is a case of things being such that it is raining: I can only think that things being as they are is a case of things being such that things being as they are is a case of things being such that it is raining. But … and so on.

So when we think through the ambition to place the world beyond the conceptual, we end up oscillating between a sense of confinement within the conceptual, and a desperate attempt to escape from this confinement—either by relating thought and world from sideways-on, or by pointing at the world outside of a propositional context. It is the ambition that is at fault. It is true that the world consists of things which we can only think about, not themselves expressible in words. But thought answers to how things are. When we speak about things, we do not speak about how things are. When we speak about things, we say how things are. In that sense the world is not removed from what we can express in words. This is the truth behind the Tractarian slogan, "The world is everything that is the case; the totality of facts, not of things." The world is not all that we can think about, but all that we can truly think. This is the conception which I will discuss in the next chapter.

Conclusions

According to Travis, to represent some element of the world as being some way for elements of the world to be (to represent Sid as smoking) is really to represent the world (things being as they are) as being a way for the world to be (things being such that Sid is smoking). (§2)

What is this move supposed to do? It is an attempt to make explicit what is added to a thought by asserting it. It thus faces the same problems which Frege's similar attempts faced. A forceless thought cannot be thought, and so is not a thought. (§3.1)

But Travis goes farther than Frege in separating a thought and its conceptual structure. This turns the thought (even more than it already was for Frege) into a thing-in-itself. A structureless thought cannot be thought, and so is not a thought. (§3.2)

A further motivation Travis has to construe what is given as non-conceptual is that falsehood is an achievement. This is in itself an insight, if we can separate it from the conception of the world as lying beyond the conceptual sphere. (§4)

Travis applies the same Cartesian structure to his account of perception. Our senses afford awareness of our surroundings; only in response do we take a stance on how things are. What is given in the first moment is "things being as they are". But when we think this through, nothing can be given in the first moment, because it is not yet awareness. It is just not the moment of being given the reason for a judgement. And so we cannot draw the conclusion that this reason is non-conceptual. Travis construes what is given in such a way that it cannot be given. (§5)

If we accept that conception, we find ourselves oscillating between a sense of confinement within the conceptual, and a condemned attempt to escape from this confinement — either by pointing beyond it towards what is given, or by trying to relate thought and world from sideways-on. So we must reject the conception. (§6)

IV Saddled with content

§1 Introduction

In *Mind and World*, John McDowell defends a conception of reality as "made up of the sort of thing one can think," and of perceptual experience as being presented with such things. (1994: 27–8) Although this may sound idealistic, it is not supposed to be metaphysically contentious. All it is meant to consist of is a truism or two, expressed in what McDowell calls 'reminders'.[58] Reminding ourselves of these truisms is meant to discourage a conception of reality as lying beyond the conceptual sphere, a conception sometimes referred to as 'scheme-content dualism' or 'the Myth of the Given'. Since McDowell's view is defined in opposition to such dualism, I will refer to it as *monism*; it includes what Jennifer Hornsby has defended under the name 'the identity theory of truth' (Hornsby 1997).

It may seem - it has seemed to critics - that monism flies in the face of what also must be truistic: that reality is made up of the sort of thing one thinks *about* (such things as sparrows, not thoughts about sparrows), and that it is such things which are present in experience. My immediate aim is to show that despite this appearance to the contrary, there is a truistic way of understanding monism, one that serves McDowell's purposes, but also that the Fregean framework within

58 A nod to Wittgenstein's practice of assembling reminders: "Something that one knows when nobody asks one, but no longer knows when one is asked to explain it, is something that has to be called to mind. (And it is obviously something which, for some reason, it is difficult to call to mind.)" (PI §89)

which he defends the view prevents us from understanding it in that way. My deeper aim is to display and partially motivate the kind of philosophical style and outlook within which monism can come into its own, one in which we take up the standpoint of self-consciousness, and articulate, from that standpoint, what we already implicitly knew in virtue of being human. I hope that pronouncement will cease to be obscure by the end of this chapter.

I will proceed as follows. In §2 I introduce the two reminders, and the view they are meant to oppose. In §3 I introduce my preferred way of understanding those reminders, and contrast this with the way McDowell understands them in *Mind and World*. In §4 I illustrate how McDowell's understanding encourages the sort of dualism which he wants to avoid. This makes for a kind of antinomy between monism and dualism. We can escape the antinomy, I argue in §5, if we stop referring to a thought, and instead take up the standpoint it constitutes. This requires correcting for Frege's separation of force and content, and his anti-psychologism more generally.

§2 Two reminders

I will distinguish between a reminder on truth and a reminder on experience. Minimally, the reminder on truth says that thinking reaches all the way to what it answers to: we can think that things are a certain way, and when we think truly, things are in fact that way. "Dressed up in high-flown language," McDowell expresses it as follows:

> [T]here is no ontological gap between the sort of thing one can mean, or generally the sort of thing one can think, and the sort of thing that can be the case. When one thinks truly, what one thinks *is* what is the case. So since the world is everything that is the case …, there is no gap between thought, as such, and the world. (McDowell 1994: 27)

Jennifer Hornsby has incisively defended this view under its traditional name 'the identity theory of truth'. The identity theory of truth says that true thoughts, which Hornsby refers to as true 'thinkables', are the same as facts, and the world is the totality of facts (Hornsby 1997). Neither for Hornsby nor for McDowell is it supposed to be a theory in any weighty sense. As McDowell puts it, "All the point comes to is that one can think, for instance, *that spring has begun*, and that very same thing, *that spring has begun*, can be the case." (McDowell 1994: 27)

But the point comes to a little more than that, since it also contains an endorsement of the opening lines of the Tractatus, a conception of the world as everything that is the case. Those lines continue, "The world is the totality of facts, *not* of things." (TLP 1.1, my emphasis) So one might think that this conception allows for a distance between the world, thus understood, and the world conceived as a totality of things[59], primarily the sort of things that we find around us, and are present to us in perceptual experience. If we cannot drive a wedge between true thinkables and facts, one might feel there must then be a distance

59 As P.F. Strawson wrote, although in criticism of correspondence theories of truth, "… if we read 'world' (a sadly corrupted word) as 'heavens and earth,' talk of facts, situations and states of affairs, as 'included in' or 'parts of' the world is, obviously, metaphorical. The world is the totality of things, not of facts." (Strawson 1953: 139n)

between facts and the more or less concrete particular objects which make up our surroundings. I take it that McDowell's account of experience is supposed to deny that these two conceptions of 'the world' can come apart.[60] The world, conceived as everything that is the case, includes the sensible world.[61] What assures this I will refer to as McDowell's reminder on experience. Minimally, it says that in experience it can be manifest to us that something is the case. McDowell expresses it as follows (26):

> Although reality is independent of our thinking, it is not to be pictured as outside an outer boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere. That things are thus and so is the conceptual content of an experience, but if the subject of the experience is not misled, that very same thing, that things are thus and so, is also a perceptible fact, an aspect of the perceptible world.

It seems to me that this second reminder is crucial to understanding the force and ambition of 'the identity theory of truth', but since it does

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60 Nor do they come apart in the Tractatus: "To perceive a complex object is to see that its constituents hang together thus and so." (5.5423) This continues with a discussion of the Necker cube. When we see it first one way, then another, "we really see two different facts." See Sullivan 2005 for an elaboration of both the affinity and the difference with McDowell's view.

61 McDowell does recognise a broader conception of 'world', but concentrates his efforts on dissolving puzzlement about the relation between thinking and the sensible world: "[S]ince our cognitive predicament is that we confront the world by way of sensible intuition (to put it in Kantian terms), our reflection on the very idea of thought's directedness at how things are must begin with answerability to the empirical world." (McDowell 1994/6: xii)

not belong to the identity theory strictly speaking, it will be convenient to have a name for the two reminders combined. I will refer to the encompassing view as *monism*; it is shaped by an opposition to the more familiar scheme-content *dualism*.[62] (McDowell 1994: 4) Speaking broadly and metaphorically, one could think of monism as a kind of empirical realism about conceptual form: what our words make manifest, the conceptual forms we express, can also be grasped in experience, and can thus be found enmattered in the world around us.

Reminding ourselves of these supposed truisms is meant to dispel a sense of distance between thinking and reality, and in that way discourage engaging in constructing any more substantial theory of the relation between thinking and reality. There is a felt need for a more substantial theory when reality is pictured as lying "outside an outer boundary that encloses the conceptual sphere." It seems that for McDowell this is the same as denying the truisms. If the world, and our apprehension of it in experience, were not conceptually structured, in the sense in which the truisms say that they are, the ultimate justifications for our judgements would not be of the form *that things are thus and so*. It would not be possible to make an experience, or what in it we experience, available for discursive deliberation in the way that a thought can be made available for discursive deliberation. Whatever can be expressed in words, what has the form *that things are thus and so*, could only be a response to experience. But this, McDowell thinks,

62 My use of 'monism' here is the same as in the first chapter. Monism is the combination of McDowell's two reminders, understood in the minimal sense in which they are genuinely truistic. In this chapter I distinguish this from the more substantial understanding which McDowell's Fregean commitments lead him to.

would make it impossible to see such a response as rationally motivated at all. For the response to be rationally motivated, it should at least be possible, even if we normally don't, to step back and discursively deliberate over whether this experience warrants this response. But that would require putting the relevant aspect of the experience itself into words▮ exactly what, on a conception that denies the truisms, one cannot do. At best one could try to point at "something that is simply received in experience" (McDowell 1994: 6), and McDowell clearly feels such a pointing would be an empty gesture.

Where McDowell's theme is justification, there Hornsby's theme is a theory of truth. A conception of the world as lying beyond the conceptual sphere is then what is embodied in a correspondence theory of truth. In contrast to the identity theory of truth, a correspondence theory conceives the truth of a thought as consisting in a relation of correspondence between the thought and something worldly which one can only refer to, and this Hornsby takes to be incoherent. Of course, thinking answers to how *things* are, worldly things which one can generally only refer to, but one can *say* how things are—that is just the truism which the identity theory reminds us of. By contrast, the correspondence theorist conceives 'how things are'[63] in such a way that it cannot be said. "From the point of view introduced by the identity theory, it will be distinctive of correspondence theorists to seek items located outside the realm of thinkables, and outside the realm of ordin-

63 Given the dualism of a correspondence theory, a correspondence theorist will be inclined to find phrases such as 'how things are' ambiguous: there is what we say when we say how things are, and there is what makes it true or false to say so. On this second understanding of 'how things are', it is not, for the correspondence theorist, something that can be expressed in words.

ary objects of reference, but related, some of them, to whole thinkables." (Hornsby 1997: 7) Hornsby goes on to show that this idea takes many guises. The worldly correspondent may be a state of affairs, a situation, a particular case, a percept (Russell), the cosmic distribution of particles (Quine), or even a fact, as long as it is conceived as that which makes a thought true, without itself being thinkable. Such a theory pictures a thought as distanced from the world, so that for it to be true is for it to stand in a relation to what is 'out there' when it is true.

Hornsby writes, "the identity theory is worth considering to the extent that correspondence theories are worth avoiding." (Hornsby 1997: 6) And McDowell believes that if we accept that reality lies beyond the conceptual sphere, we are in a hopeless predicament, and no theory will help us out of it. "Of course thought can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance implicit in the very idea of thought." (McDowell 1994: 27) But even if there is no distance implicit in the very idea of thought, there may be a distance implicit in a philosopher's conception of thought. I will argue that the Fregean framework within which McDowell (and Hornsby, but the focus will be on McDowell) defends monism - in particular the separation of thinkable content from assertoric force, and the consequent reification of thinkable content - blocks a truistic understanding of his reminders. Now if we cannot understand the reminders as truisms, we would be tempted to think that there is, after all, a greater distance between thinking and reality than monism allows for, and then this better not be a hopeless predicament. We would be thus tempted, but I think McDowell is right in wanting to avoid dualism, and even in taking such a conception to be obviously incoherent, flying in the face of what

really are truisms, properly understood. By means of a change of perspective, I will suggest, we can regain a truistic understanding of the reminders, a defensible version of monism.

§3 Perceptible facts

In *Mind and World*, McDowell brings our attention to one central motivation for dualism: a restriction that the concept of nature or causality has undergone in modern thinking. Generally speaking, the restriction is to the effect that anything in nature has to be understood in the way natural phenomena are understood in the natural sciences. In the case of sensory experience the restriction comes to this, that any contribution the subject makes to her experience must stand in contrast to receptivity. It cannot be simply part of receiving what is there before her eyes; it must be a response to receiving what is there: a matter of imposing a form, construction, or interpretation onto what is given. We can reject the underlying assumption, and allow for a receptive contribution by the perceiving subject. To *receive* something is not merely to be hit by it, as a ball is hit by a baseball bat; one has to be in some way ready for what is received, as a catcher is ready for the ball flying into his mitt. For example, in hearing the unity of a chord or melody, I am making a receptive contribution to my experience—I draw on personal capacities (my ears, without my understanding, are not sensitive to such unity), but the unity I find is not something I construe or add to what I receive; it is there to be found in the sounds impinging on my eardrums. Without this capacity, I cannot even so much as hear the music as music, composed of notes and chords and rhythms; it would be mere noise to me. Moreover, it seems to me that

there is some justification in McDowell's claim that the capacity I thus draw on is a *conceptual* capacity; after all, to hear this unity is to be in a position to refer to it demonstratively (*that* chord, *that* melody), thus making it available for discursive deliberation.[64] By thinking of experience as a collaboration between mind and world, instead of a confrontation, we can avoid one route towards dualism. (McDowell thinks the contribution the subject makes must be passive (10), and I will later argue against this conviction: even *exercising* conceptual capacities can be "a matter of receptivity in operation".)

But a conception of experience as a confrontation is only one pressure towards dualism; I want to draw attention to another. The dualist can himself be seen as motivated by something which seems merely truistic. When McDowell affirms his truisms, which picture the world as the totality of true thoughts, the dualist will worry where this leaves the more or less concrete particular objects which make up our surroundings, such things as clouds, people, lakes, snowflakes, sparrows, and so on. Such things are spatio-temporally located, undergo and effect changes, and can be present in perceptual experience; thoughts, by contrast, are generally taken to be abstract objects, grasped by the mind instead of the senses. Even if this second part of the contrast is

64 There is some danger in calling it a conceptual capacity. It may suggest that we have an understanding of what the capacity is from its use in discursive activity, prior to invoking perceptual experience. It may then seem that the monist is projecting something from discursive activity onto perceptual experience. But we don't have to equate *conceptual* and *discursive*, and we don't have to think of the exercise of a conceptual capacity in discursive activity as prior in the order of understanding to its exercise in experience. They can be two sides of the same capacity, only understandable in terms of one another.

contentious, the first part is merely truistic: what is present in experience are the sort of things we find around us, the sort of things we think *about*. If McDowell wants to discourage a dualism between thought and world, he will have to accommodate this truism. He may of course choose to reserve the word 'world' for the totality of facts, but things have to be given some central place in the picture.

So it may seem, as critics have thought[65], that identifying the world with the totality of facts presents McDowell with a dilemma: either facts are somehow made up out of things that we find around us, in which case they seem to be distanced from thoughts, or facts are true thoughts, in which case they seem to be distanced from the things that we find around us. In Fregean terms they would, on the first horn of the dilemma, belong to the realm of reference (what we think about); on the second horn, they would belong to the realm of sense (what we think). But this is just an expression of the dualism McDowell aims to discourage, and he would reject the dilemma. He does conceive facts, and thoughts generally, as belonging to the realm of sense, but he does not take this to distance them from the realm of reference. Facts, on McDowell's conception, are neither made up out of concrete objects, nor are they distanced from them; they are *aspects* of the things we find around us: "aspect[s] of the perceptible world." (26)

65 Julian Dodd presents this dilemma (Dodd 1995), but does not see the choice McDowell has already made to place facts in the realm of sense, nor does he see an escape from the dilemma. Peter Sullivan likewise thinks that the modern pronents of the identity theory face a problem given that they conceive facts as true Fregean senses; he argues that the author of the Tractatus, unlike McDowell and Hornsby, escapes the dilemma (Sullivan 2005).

Maybe we can understand McDowell's talk of aspects, and generally his reminders, in the following way. In experience things, the sort of things we find around us, impress themselves on our senses, and thus become present to us. But a thing is not divorced from *how it is*. We can't have the thing before our eyes without also having its condition before our eyes. So in a sense, 'how it is', to the extent that this is manifest from our point of view, also impresses itself on our senses, and is present to us. For something to be present to us just is for us to be perceptually aware of how it manifestly is. For example, in observing a sparrow on my table, the sparrow and the table impress themselves on my senses, and in virtue of my being open to how they manifestly are (drawing on my capacity for grasping spatio-temporal arrangements), I enjoy perceptual awareness of *where the sparrow is*: on my table.

Understood in this way, McDowell's reminder on experience should be uncontentious. What would experience be if it did not already involve such achievements as seeing where things are? It would be, in a familiar phrase, a blooming, buzzing confusion. It does happen, as an exception to the norm, that my senses are registering impingements without *me* being aware of it, as when a buzzing noise is distracting me without my realising (I may only notice the noise once it stops). And even when I attend to something, I may fail to see how it is in some important respect: observing what I take to be a cloud against a clear blue sky, I am unable to see where it is; then I see that it is smoke rising from a factory chimney, and things fall into place. But experience cannot generally or normally be like that. If experience were generally like the first case, mere sensibility, uninformed by the understanding, *I* would not see how things are—I would not be self-consciously aware

of my surroundings. And if my surroundings were generally like the second case, without enough familiar anchors to orient myself, I would fail to see *how things are*—I would not be at home in the world. In both cases, I would fail to have a functioning capacity of perception. As it is, being human and more or less at home in the world, I do have a functioning capacity of perception. In a normal, good case of experience I simply see how things are. It is to such a case that McDowell's reminder applies.[66]

McDowell's reminder on truth can be understood in a similarly unproblematic way. When I think truly, my thinking reaches all the way to the fact: I think of the sparrow that it is on the table, and on the table is in fact where the sparrow is. With that I reach the world—at least if, "The world is everything that is the case," may be understood without reifying facts, as a way of saying that the world is all things, being all the ways they are. Thinking stops nowhere short of the world: when one thinks truly, what one thinks of is the very way one thinks it is.[67] That again cannot be contentious.

But can we understand McDowell in this way? The form of expression which he chooses ("that very same thing, *that things are thus and so*") suggests that we cannot. In the understanding of his reminders just sketched, I made sense of what it is for *that things are thus and so* to be an aspect of things by taking up the standpoint of having an experience,

66 See also Sullivan (2011: 184): "At home in the world, I can simply say what I see."

67 That formula is limited to predicative thoughts. But if we can manage to find it unmysterious that predicative thought reaches all the way to the world, there won't be a deep problem about differently shaped thoughts.

and then reflecting, from that standpoint, on what it is for an object to be self-consciously present to me. In philosophy I then merely bring to reflective thought what I already know, unreflectively, in seeing how things are. Similarly, in my paraphrase of McDowell's reminder on truth, I take up the standpoint of thinking that the sparrow is on the table, and use this thought (not refer to it) in order to say when it would be true. In both cases what I say philosophically is an articulation of what I already know in experiencing/thinking what I do, or generally, in representing things as I do. In representing things as being some way I already know how my representation stands to what it answers to; I do not need to step back from my representation, refer to it, and from such a perspective relate it to the world.

I am weaving together two themes, my central themes in this chapter. One is the self-consciousness of representation. This is also the central theme in McDowell's work, and in the tradition of German idealism from which he draws. It is notoriously difficult to say clearly what it comes to, but all I really need, for present purposes, is the schematic characterisation that in representing some thing as being some way, and in virtue of doing so, I know what it is that I'm doing; and since what I'm doing is representing the world as being some way, I know how my thought, the thought that things are that way, stands to the world. Just this, I believe, motivates and justifies McDowell's methodology of issuing reminders (what some refer to as his 'Wittgensteinian quietism'). Because in using a thought I already know what it is, I do not have to go beyond what I already know when, in philosophy, I want to say what thought is—I merely have to remind myself of what I already know, bring it to philosophical reflection. (Such quietism, then,

is not the nihilistic view that representation has no essence, but the view that the essence cannot be hidden.) Contrast this with suffering from a disease. Even when in suffering from a disease I know what it is that I am suffering from, I do not know this merely in virtue of suffering from it. So in saying what it is that I am suffering from, I have to call in a doctor or medical scientist, or if I happen to be one, treat myself as another. Here reminders won't do; what is needed is empirical observation and discovery.

The other theme is the transparency of representation. There would be a gap between representation and reality if representations generally were *opaque*, getting in between the representing subject and reality. This can happen as an exception to the norm. I say of a cat that it is on the mat. In fact the cat, having recently mastered esoteric meditation, is hovering a few inches above the yoga mat. In such a case my words, and the thought expressed, stand in between me and a transparent viewpoint on reality. The thought becomes itself the object of reflection when someone says in response, "It is true (in a sense) and false (in a sense)." (Such cases play an important role in the correspondence theory defended by J.L. Austin, and under his influence, in the view of Charles Travis.) But this can only be an exception to the norm. Normally, representation is transparent: in representing things as being some way, not the thought I express but its subject matter is on my mind. When I think that the sparrow is on the table, I do not think *of* my thought, of *that the sparrow is on the table*; I think of the sparrow that it is on the table. Something similar is true for perceptual experience. When I see that the sparrow is on the table, I do not see (the thought) *that the sparrow is on the table*; I see the sparrow, and normally to see this

is to see where it is: on the table. I would be in the grip of a vicious regress if generally, in order to represent things as being some way, I had to step back from my representation, and again represent it as standing in some relation to the world—as if to represent something as being some way were like drawing a picture for the mind, which the mind then again can interpret in various ways (but to interpret it is to draw another picture, etc.). Such a regress could arise in various ways. But at least one version is stopped before it can get started once we realise that representation is self-conscious: because in representing things as being some way I already know how I thus stand to the world, I do not need to step back and reflect *on* the representation, on *that things are this way*, in order to relate it to the world. My thought is, so far, not *on* my mind; it is part of my mind. In thinking I make up my mind; my mind is made up of what I think.[68]

Contrast this with McDowell's formulations. Both in his reminder on truth, and in his reminder on experience, McDowell uses 'that things are thus and so' as a referring expression. What it refers to is supposed to be 'the sort of thing' which one can think, which is also the sort of

68 The theme of transparency is central in the work of Peter Sullivan, to which I am much indebted: "In this, neither the sentence nor the thought obtrudes itself as the object of consideration, or obstructs one's view of things. Quite the reverse. The sentence understood, the thought, constitutes one's view of things." (Sullivan 2004: 733)

Sullivan tends to emphasise not so much the self-consciousness of representation, but the need for a sentence to display the essence of a thought. I think this is another side of the same coin. It may be a many-sided coin: as I indicate, a form of words, the thought expressed, can be opaque when it fails to capture the intended circumstances aptly enough.

thing that can be presented to one in experience, and a totality of which makes up the world. In this way McDowell steps back from the standpoint taken up in thinking a thought; instead he refers to the thought, and from this perspective relates it to reality. This finds expression in the slogan of the identity theory: the world is the totality of true thinkables.[69] Its rejection of a correspondence theory does not come in the form of a rejection of the very idea that we can conceive truth as a relation between *that things are thus and so* and reality, but rather in the form of a rejection of the sort of relation involved: whereas the correspondence theorist thinks truth lies in a relation between a thought and something outside of it, something not itself thinkable, there the identity theorist takes the relation to be one of identity between a thought and a fact.[70]

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69 McDowell's work on modesty for a theory of meaning suggests a different conception; in fact, the conception which I will recommend. On the right-hand side of a T-sentence of a Davidsonian theory of meaning, the sentence, which is mentioned on the left-hand side, is used to say when it would be true. This contrasts with the 'very same thing' talk in Mind and World. My contention, then, is that there is a tension between the identity theory of truth, as it is expressed in Mind and World, and the central insight behind modesty for a theory of meaning.

70 To put it this way may seem to underestimate the wide disagreement in aims and conception of the two theories. The identity theory, unlike a correspondence theory, is not supposed to be a definition of truth; it is supposed to be a truistic reminder meant to discourage the attempt to offer any more substantial conception. But what I am arguing is that it is just in light of this commendable ambition, the ambition to be modest, that the departure from the correspondence theory looks too shallow.

The failure to take up the standpoint of self-consciousness becomes more pronounced when we turn to McDowell's understanding of his reminder on experience. Minimally, the reminder says that it can be perceptually manifest to one that things are thus and so. One can literally *see* that things are thus and so (find a conceptual form enmattered in the here and now). This would be perfectly consistent with the equally truistic idea that in experience one sees *things*, the sort of things that we find around us, if for some thing to be self-consciously present to the perceiving subject just is for her to see how it is; more specifically, that it is thus and so. But that is not how McDowell develops his reminder. He holds that in experience one is under an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so; in response, one can take this appearance at face value, as would be the default, or reject it as an illusion. In other words, in experience one is presented with 'a thinkable content', *that things are thus and so*; in response one can affirm or deny this content. Using 'that things are thus and so' as a referring expression, McDowell parses 'seeing that things are thus and so' as seeing what that expression refers to, and so he conceives *that things are thus and so* as the object of awareness. "What we see is: that such-and-such is the case." (29) Not that he would deny that in experience objects are present to us. But what this means, according to his view, is that we are presented with thinkables which we can accept or reject.

It is far from an idiosyncrasy of style that McDowell expresses his reminders in the way that he does. It is the way in which, within the Fregean framework of *Mind and World*, his central, Kantian thought finds expression, that a robust realism requires a combination of spontaneity and receptivity. Let me start with calling the framework to

mind. Frege observed that one can grasp a thought without acknowledging it as true, for instance when asking a question, or when the thought is used in the antecedent of a conditional. He concluded that we must distinguish between a thought, in itself forceless, and the force (assertive, inquisitive, etc.) with which it is used. In the case of assertion, Frege notes, "both are so closely joined in an indicative sentence that it is easy to overlook their separability," (1918: 294) and this is certainly true. The force/content distinction comes to this, a distinction between what I mean to say in asserting what I do, and *what* I mean: the thing that I mean. What I mean in saying that the sparrow is on the table is that the sparrow *is* on the table (I mean it with force), but *what* I mean, on Frege's conception, is the thinkable content supposedly given by 'that the sparrow is on the table'. The act of assertion is analysed as consisting in the act of attaching a force to a thinkable content; the thinkable content now becomes something to refer to, an object of some sort. It is essential to Frege's anti-psychologism that this should be so: it allows him to conceive logic as being about the things that one can think, uncontaminated by the activity of thinking, which he takes to be a merely psychological issue.

I do not believe that McDowell would want to draw quite that contrast. But where the force/content distinction is Frege's way of keeping apart logic and psychology, there, differently but relatedly, it is McDowell's way of preventing the moderate form of idealism that he wants to defend from slighting the independence of reality. McDowell wants to accommodate the pressures behind dualism by acknowledging that the activity of thinking is constrained by something outside of it—by the sensible world, or what comes to the same, our perceptual awareness

of it. But what the dualist forgets is that in order for this to be a genuine constraint, one that allows us to conceive thinking as rationally answerable, the constraint cannot be from outside the form of thought. Thinking cannot answer to something that is alien to it. This Kantian thought then within the Fregean framework finds expression in the form of the force/content distinction. Although the constraint must be from outside thinking, it should be from within thinkable content: "[I]f we are to give due acknowledgement to the independence of reality, what we need is a constraint from outside *thinking* and *judging*, our exercises of spontaneity. The constraint does not need to be from outside *thinkable contents*." (28) And although experience is not active - it is not judging that things are such and such, but rather being presented with something - what we are presented with is nonetheless already conceptually shaped. In order to be presented with a thinkable content, receive it, we must draw on our conceptual capacities. It would be inapt to speak of exercising conceptual capacities; "that would suit an activity, whereas experience is passive" (10):

> In experience one finds oneself saddled with content. One's conceptual capacities have already been brought into play, before one has any choice in the matter. The content is not something one has put together oneself, as when one decides what to say about something. In fact it is precisely because experience is passive, a case of receptivity in operation, that the conception I am recommending can satisfy the craving for a limit to freedom which underlies the Myth of the Given.

In experience we are saddled with content. In response, in active judgement, we can either accept or reject this content: "How one's experience represents things to be is not under one's control, but it is

up to one whether one accepts the appearance or rejects it." (11)

McDowell talks of what is 'under one's control' in order to align the contrast between the receptivity of experience and the spontaneity of judgement with the contrast between passivity and activity, which he needs for parsing empirical judgement in a moment of passively 'being presented with content' and a moment of active judgement in response. Experience is supposed to be passive because it is not under our control, and relatedly, we do not bear responsibility for our experience as we bear responsibility for our beliefs. But the two contrasts do not align. Receptivity indeed contrasts with *creativity*. For instance, in keeping up our end in a conversation we have a great freedom: there is not, as there generally is in the case of seeing how things are, *a* way of getting it right.[71] But receptivity does not contrast with activity, in the somewhat special sense in which knowledge and belief are forms of activity. It is true that we cannot choose what to experience, but neither can we choose what to believe; nonetheless, we do not speak of 'being believed to'. (To say, "I am of the opinion," is to distance oneself from one's opinion.) Nor is it true that we bear no responsibility for experience. One may be criticised, in much the same way as one may be criticised for a mistaken belief, for failing to exercise one's capacities properly in experience, as a musician would be, or a music critic, when failing to hear the unity of a chord or melody. Once we rid ourselves, with McDowell's help, of the restricted conception of causality I mentioned before, there is no need anymore to speak of experience in the

71 I say generally, because there are cases, such as Jastrow's duck/rabbit picture, where one can see something in various ways. Such cases occur in 'real life' too, but it seems to me important that they do not occur all the time.

passive voice ('being under an appearance'); we can just speak of experience as we ordinarily do, in the active voice, with the perceiving subject in the grammatical subject position: "I see how things are."

Not only do we not need to speak as McDowell does, we better not: McDowell's adherence to the Fregean structure makes an unproblematic understanding of his own reminders unavailable to him, and given the central role that it plays in *Mind and World*, to the reader. The force/content distinction, in this form, amounts to a separation of *that things are thus and so* from the 'I think' or the 'I see,' and a problem arises on both sides. On the side of the thought, reflecting on it, referring to it, it seems an implausible candidate to be what the world is made of, what impresses itself on our senses, and is given or present in perceptual experience. In referring to a thought, and construing it as the object of perceptual awareness, McDowell takes up the perspective from which the conception he wants to discourage looks unavoidable. I will elaborate on this objection in the next section.

A related problem arises on the side of the 'I see.' On McDowell's picture, in experience we are still at a distance from the thinkable content which is presented to us, not taking up the standpoint it constitutes. It appears to us that things are thus and so, but to be thus appeared to is not yet to see that things are thus and so – it only becomes that when we take the appearance at face value. In this way McDowell posits a kind of deep structure of experience, underneath what is manifest to us in experiencing what we do. Normally, in seeing that a sparrow is on my table, I do not hold this content at arm's length. I would not even know how to begin to doubt it. I simply see, as part of the sparrow's being present to me, where it is: on the table. It does happen sometimes

that an experience becomes opaque. It may look to me as if the sparrow is on the table, but also as if the sparrow is just to the side of the table, hanging still in the air. In such a case I can rid myself of the illusion by looking closer, or looking from a different angle, and it is only because I then spontaneously see how things are (I do not again have to decide whether to take these appearances at face value) that I can reject the misleading appearance. It could not generally be the case that I had to decide whether or not to take appearances at face value. If this were generally the case, there would not be enough to go on to make the decision. If exception became normal case, and every appearance as such would still be at a distance from me, only becoming my judgement by my taking it at face value, I'd be so alienated from my surroundings that I would not even have a working capacity of perception. Of course, McDowell does not think that in experience I actively have to decide, for every appearance, whether or not to take it at face value, but this is nonetheless the deep structure that he posits.[72] This

72 On McDowell's picture, at least as later explicated, I do not normally consciously decide to take an appearance at face value. This is normally something I have already done as soon as I enjoy an experience. "'Unless there are grounds for suspicion, such as odd lighting conditions, having it look to one as if things are a certain way — ostensibly seeing things to be that way — becomes accepting that things are that way by a sort of default, involving no exercise of the freedom that figures in a Kantian conception of judgement.' (1998, p. 439)

But to the puzzlement in the main passage it does not matter very much whether accepting appearances at face value is done consciously or somehow automatically achieved. The same question that arises there for deciding to take an appearance at face value, now arises for automatically having done so.

structure exactly fits someone who is in a position that a radical sceptic feels he is in; and so, far from making it intelligible that the world is within the mind's reach, this picture brings such scepticism to life.

It may seem that McDowell also has another motivation; it may seem he draws apart 'being appeared to' and 'taking the appearance at face value' in order to accommodate the possibility of illusion. But McDowell also writes that "it does not matter very much that one may be misled." (9) Worries about illusory experience tend to motivate a shallow scepticism about the possibility of knowledge, whereas McDowell wants to allay a deeper anxiety about how discursive activity can be even so much as contentful, engaging meaningfully with the world. Laying to rest the shallower form of scepticism is then supposed to become a routine by-product. It requires merely resisting the temptation to model a good case of perceptual experience on what the good and the bad, illusory case have in common – that is, it requires what has come to be known as disjunctivism. But when McDowell comes to fill in the distance between the passivity of experience and the spontaneity of thought, all he has to offer is the possibility of rejecting an appearance as an illusion. Without this possibility, there just is no distance between seeing and knowing. The possibility of 'being misled' ends up playing a central role in drawing the contrast McDowell feels is needed to allay the deeper form of scepticism, even though that form of scepticism is not supposed to be motivated by illusions at all. Moreover, on McDowell's view, every experience, good or bad, is one of being presented with an appearance, but this is just what the good

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How can I automatically accept appearances at face value except against a background of simply seeing how things are?

and the bad case have in common. There is a tension, then, between McDowell's disjunctivism and the role that the presentation/response structure plays in his way of spelling out his reminder on experience. It would be better in accord with disjunctivism to take experience to be simply seeing how things are (except when it is not). So far this is merely an *ad hominem* objection; but I do think we should be resolute disjunctivists, and I will return to this in the last section.

§4 Antinomy

The perspective which McDowell takes up in defending monism is a perspective from which dualism looks inescapable. From such a perspective we cannot understand how a true thought can be a fact, if a fact is also to be the sort of thing that can impress itself on our senses, and be manifestly there before our eyes. I will mention three objections which monism faces when 'seeing that things are thus and so' is parsed as seeing (the thinkable content) *that things are thus and so*, and which are avoided, I believe, on the conception which I want to recommend.

(1) The first objection is something like an appeal to intuition. A thought cannot literally be touched, as I think anyone will acknowledge. Can it be seen? I look around, and I see leaves lying on the ground, the reflection of the sun in the windows, branches softly swaying, the aforementioned sparrow still on my table, but no matter how hard I look, nowhere do I find (the fact) *that the sparrow is on the table*, or any of the other things that I can judge to be so. *That things are thus and so* is not a thing among the things in my surroundings. The persuasiveness of this consideration lies in its naïveté. It just seems obvious that

thoughts cannot literally be seen. The philosopher who says otherwise must have a substantial metaphysical thesis, and so the burden of proof lies on his side. Though McDowell would not accept the burden of proof – it is common-sensical that we can see that things are thus and so – his attack on the Myth of the Given is supposed to dislodge this conviction. Reminding ourselves that in experience one draws on conceptual capacities, we can return to a kind of pre-philosophical innocence: in experience it can be manifest to us that things are thus and so. But the current problem is that McDowell's attack focusses on the restricted conception of causality, and not on the more naïve pressure behind the conviction, which gets its thrust from taking *that things are thus and so* to be the object of awareness. Looking at *that things are thus and so*, it looks abstract, and so awareness *of* it cannot be perceptual awareness. Think also of Frege's exclamation, "How different is the process of handing someone a hammer from that of communicating a thought!" (Frege 1918: 311)

(2) That, as I said, is a more an appeal to intuition than an argument. One way to argue for this is through reflection on the possibility of false thought. Say that a thought, *that things are thus and so*, is the sort of thing that can be there before our eyes, the sort of thing that can be 'in the world' in that sense. Then if the thought is false, there would be no such thing in the world. But if a thought is the sort of thing that *can* be before our eyes, this now just seems another way of saying that there would be no such thing. For instance, if we take the thought *that the leaves are on the ground* to just be what is in the world when it is true, *the leaves' being on the ground* (one may call this a state of affairs), then there is no such thing if the thought is false. But the thought must have

being, since it must be thinkable, whether it is true or false. So we cannot equate the thought with the leaves' being on the ground, or more generally with the sort of thing that can be before our eyes, impress itself on our senses, and be present to us in perceptual experience.[73] If *that things are thus and so* is an object of some sorts, it is an abstract object, and awareness of it cannot be perceptual awareness.

(3) Another way to argue for this is by drawing a contrast between the changeable world and the atemporality of truth. For it to be true that something is the case is not merely for it to be true at the moment; it is for it to always have been, and always to continue to be, a true thing for one to think. It is of course not just that its truth value cannot change. The thought itself cannot change, at least not in its essentials, if it is to be the same truth or falsehood for all eternity. Frege was motivated in

73 The argument turns on this, by thinking of a fact as something that can be there before our eyes (impress itself on our senses, be present to us in experience, be "an aspect of the perceptible world"), we cannot help but think of its obtaining as a form of existence. Even if it is inapt to say it exists, whatever other term we use (obtaining, subsisting, being in the world) is parasitic on our understanding of what existence is. But that understanding requires us to say that if it does not exist (obtains, etc.), it fails to be, and so fails to be anything (in particular, thinkable).

This is part of what motivated Russell and Moore to reject the identity theory, after having first embraced it. Hornsby comments, "I believe that Moore felt forced to retract his first thoughts about truth because of his failure to see that facthood has to be reckoned an inessential property of any contingent truth." (Hornsby 1999: 244) But it seems to me just the identity theory's construal of a fact as something 'there in the world' that blocks an understanding of facthood as an inessential property.

this way to place thoughts outside the changeable realm (Frege 1918: 309):

> The actual world (*die Welt des Wirklichen*) is a world in which this acts (*wirkt*) on that, changing it, and in turn undergoing reactions (*Gegenwirkungen*) which change it. All this is a process in time. We will hardly call actual (*wirklich*) that which is timeless and unchangeable."[74]

Undergoing and effecting changes, as the passage makes clear, is one way to describe causal interaction. So if a thought is not the sort of thing to undergo or effect changes, it is not the sort of thing to impress itself on our senses, or be present to us in perceptual experience (Frege 1918: 292):

> A thought is something immaterial (*Unsinnlich*), and all sensibly perceptible things are excluded from the realm of things for which truth can even so much as come into question… But don't we see that the sun has risen? And don't we thereby see that this is true? *That the sun has risen* is not an object which emits rays that reach my eyes, it is not a visible thing like the sun itself.

I would not want to recommend Frege's view. My point is merely that it is hard to resist this view once we parse 'seeing that the sun has risen' as seeing (the thinkable content) *that the sun has risen*. *If* a thought is an object, it must be an abstract object, and awareness of it cannot be

74 Not that Frege thinks a thought is entirely without causal efficacy. A thought can act indirectly; it does so when human beings apprehend thoughts and act on them. But this does not affect a thought in its essentials: "There is lacking here something we observe throughout the order of nature: reciprocal action."

perceptual awareness.

So by taking up the referential perspective on a thought, McDowell blocks an understanding of his own reminders as truisms. I would like to hear the reminder on experience, that in experience it can be manifest to one that something is the case, as saying that in seeing what we do, we enjoy a perceptual grasp of how things manifestly are — seeing, for example, how things are causally and spatio-temporally arranged, how they are shaped, and in the case of animals, what they are doing. That is certainly a familiar phenomenon. But the shape of McDowell's account, and the form of expression which he chooses, forces me to understand this remark as saying that in experience we are presented with 'a thinkable content': *that things are thus and so*. McDowell thinks such things can be present in experience. But reflecting on the sort of thing thinkable content would be, it seems not the sort of thing to undergo or effect changes, or have a spatio-temporal location, and so not the sort of thing to impress itself on our senses or be present in experience. Though I suspect McDowell does not want to go in for this type of reflection, it is encouraged by the standpoint he takes up in spelling out his reminders.

When McDowell's reminders fail to look truistic, the conception they were meant to discourage looks correspondingly common-sensical. *Of course* the world must lie beyond the conceptual sphere. The conceptual sphere is made up of the sort of thing that one can think, and this sort of thing must be abstract, grasped by the mind instead of the senses. It is not the sort of thing that we find around us. When I think that the leaves are on the ground, for what I think to be true is for the leaves to be on the ground, but what is then 'out there' is not the thought that

the leaves are on the ground, but rather (as we are now inclined to say) the situation/state of affairs/particular case of the leaves' being on the ground, conceived as distinct from the thought; that is, conceived as not itself thinkable. In experience we can at most be acquainted with such an object. This acquaintance (*connaître)* is of a special sort, not yet involving any knowledge (*savoir*). Experience itself cannot be knowledge, since the object of knowledge is something given by a 'that' clause, and such a thing, on the current conception, lies outside the sensible realm. Experience is a bare meeting, confrontation, with the world, an opportunity for knowledge and understanding, but not itself yet that. This triggers the dualistic pointing, which McDowell criticises, at something beyond the conceptual sphere. The pointing is directed at what is met with in experience, without presupposing anything that would require more than such a bare meeting to know.

If the understanding of McDowell's reminders which I have suggested is genuinely truistic, then this dualism flies in the face of a truism. We would then have an antinomy between monism and dualism. Reflecting on what sort of thing *that things are thus and so* might be, we are led to some form of a correspondence theory, or what comes to the same, a conception of reality as lying outside the conceptual sphere. But this, as McDowell clearly sees, is a hopeless predicament. And so we are led to a rejection of the correspondence theory, a rejection which now takes the form of the identity theory of truth. But as long as it still seems that a thought is something else than the things that we find around us, this leaves one with the sense that things in their concrete particularity have been omitted from the picture.[75] It is an antinomy,

75 Sullivan for instance writes that McDowell, wanting (in my terms) to reject

and not a paradox, because there is an underlying assumption. Both sides think of a thought as something to refer to, an object of some sorts, using 'that things are thus and so' as a referring expression.

§5 An alternative

But surely a thought is essentially something to think, and only secondarily something to refer to. Taking this seriously, we can escape the antinomy by a change of perspective: stop reflecting on a thought, instead take up the standpoint it constitutes. This allows for accommodating what is truistic in the motivation of dualism. The world indeed consists of the sort of things one can think *about*. But this is not in tension with monism, since things are not divorced from how they are. The world is all things, being all the ways they are. In a typical judgement, we think of some thing that it is some way. Our thinking reaches all the way to the world because when we think truly, what we think of is the very way we think it is. This says what McDowell wants to say, but without referring to thoughts or facts, and so without encouraging dualism. Instead we can *use* a thought to say when it would be true: for it to be true to think that the sparrow is on the table is for the sparrow to be, in fact, on the table. In a slogan, truth lies in *being so*.[76] Instead of thinking of truth as a relation between a whole

dualism, but lacking the Tractatus's way of locating objects inside the facts, responds "in a cruder and historically more common way: by cutting off the offending limb. But what then remains is a picture in which the ordinary features of externality have no anchor at all. It is one that positively invites the Johnsonian, stone-kicking charge of idealism." (Sullivan 2005: 60)

76 This is one half of Aristotle's famous definition of the true and the false in

thought and something else, as the correspondence theory does, or even, as the identity theory does, as a relation between a whole thought and that same thought-as-fact, we can think of truth as a unity between the thing thought of, and the way it is thought to be, the unity thought in thinking the copula.[77]

Frege had a deep reason for construing thinkable content as an inert

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Mataphysics Gamma (the other half I will get to soon): "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true. But neither what is nor what is not are said to be." (Met. Gamma 7: 1011b 26–7)

It is important that this definition, unlike the equivalence schema "It is true that p if and only if p", is asymmetric. It is true (false) that such and such is so and so because such and such is (not) so and so, but not the other way around: "It is not because of our having the true thought that you are pale, that you are pale; rather it is because of your being pale that we who say so have a true thought." (Met., Theta 10: 1051b 6–9) "It is because of the thing's being, or not being, thus-and-so that the predication is said to be true or false..." (Cat. 5: 4b 8–10)

The asymmetry of "Truth lies in being so" distinguishes it from deflationism. The deflationist holds that what truth is is exhausted by the formula, "It is true that p if and only if p". But that formula is perfectly symmetric. By contrast, on my view the truth of the thought that things are such and such is explained by things being such and such.

One could think of asymmetry in a definition of truth as a core commitment of the correspondence theory. Being able to capture this assymmetry between thought and reality, then, is also a way in which I can show my departure from the identity theory of truth—"'Is true' means the same as 'is a fact'" is symmetric; "Truth lies in being so" is asymmetric.

object: his anti-psychologistic wish to keep thinkable content uncontaminated by the activity of thinking. It seems to me that in order to arrive at a framework within which monism can come into its own, we must correct for Frege's anti-psychologism generally. Let me briefly indicate, since it would take a book-length work to do more, the sort of contrast with Frege's approach that I have in mind. For Frege, logic

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77 Still, from a certain perspective the departure from the identity theory of truth may look shallow. That suits my purposes, since I want my recommendation to be genuinely a way of understanding McDowell's reminders. Those reminders are directed at a conception of reality as lying outside the conceptual sphere, or, as Hornsby puts it, outside the realm of thinkables, and *outside the realm of ordinary objects of reference*, "but related, some of them, to whole thinkables" (Hornsby 1997: 7). The point of the emphasised phrase is to allow for the kind of conception I want to recommend. It would be platitudinous, Hornsby agrees, to say that "true sentences say how things are", as long as 'things' here refers to ordinary objects of reference. "[T]he true sentence 'that book is red', for example, says something about how things are by saying how one of the things (sc. that book) is (sc. red)." (Hornsby 1997: 7)

The same conception of truth is implicit in the modest approach to Davidsonian theories of meaning, which both McDowell and Hornsby defend. On the right-hand side of the T-sentences of such a theory the sentence mentioned on the left-hand side is used (not referred to) in order to say when it would be true. That is just the right way to think of the relation between a sentence in its meaningful employment and the reality it answers to. The aforementioned asymmetry (see fn 37) then comes to expression in the need to find T-sentences which are explanatory, ones that are not merely true, but can be used in a theory of meaning. In a true theory that can be used as a theory of meaning, there is an explanatory relation between the left-hand side and the right-hand side of every T-sentence. So we find T-sentences such as "It is true to

cannot be about the activity of thinking; if it were, it would be merely about the way human beings happen to think, not the way they should think in order to reach the aim of thought: truth. Frege is of course right to exclude from the realm of logic the various contingencies and pathologies that afflict human reasoning; but for Frege, even normal thinking has to be handed over to empirical psychology. In a posthumously published remark, he writes:

> The logician does not have to answer the question: how does thinking normally take place in human beings? What course does it *naturally* follow in a human mind? What is natural to one person may well be unnatural to another." (Frege, PW: 7)

It is as if Frege can only think of activity in statistical terms, or in any

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say, 'Snow is white,' iff snow is white." It is just in such cases that "iff" can be replaced by because: it is true (false) to say that snow is white because snow is (not) white. And that is my preferred formula.

But neither modesty for a theory of meaning, nor the rejection of correspondence theories by itself, is the identity theory of truth. That theory embodies a certain conception of truth that is supposed to help resist the temptation towards a correspondence theory. And the conception it embodies is in tension with those good ideas which are also to be found in the work of McDowell and Hornsby. In the moment when we 'remind' ourselves that the world is the totality of true thinkables, we are not conceiving truth in the way that we do when we think of the truth of "That book is red" as amounting to that book's being red (or better: it is true to say, "That book is red," because that book is red). Because in that first moment we are referring to a thinkable, and relating it to the world from that perspective, whereas in the second moment we are using it.

case, only in the terms of a science such as psychology, which in its self-conception refrains from normative pretensions. Frege misses a conception of 'normal' or 'natural' which carries normative force, the sort of conception we find in neo-Aristotelian accounts such as Elizabeth Anscombe's *Intention* or Michael Thompson's *Life and Action*. On such an approach, norms of reason ultimately derive from what it is to be the sort of animals that we are. This allows for a kind of naturalism which is not empiricist, and so avoids being a legitimate target for Frege's anti-psychologism, without falling into the other, dualistic extreme. In the study of thought we study the characteristic activity of a certain animal, but unlike empirical scientists, we study it, so to say, from the inside—articulating knowledge we have in virtue, not of empirical observation, but of being what we are. A conception along these lines is suggested by Wittgenstein's remark, "Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing." (PI 25)

To study activity from the inside (not, of course, *looking* inside) is to say, as I illustrated before, that we bring to philosophical reflection what it is that we know in having a certain capacity; for instance, what it is that we know in knowing how to reason, or in knowing how to perceptually apprehend our surroundings. Before Aristotle discovered the study of logic people already knew how to think; in the study of logic we come to say what it is that we know in knowing that; we come to abstract away the forms of our thoughts in virtue of which they hang together in the ways that we already knew they did. Knowing how to reason is knowing how to reason correctly; it is knowledge of norms in this strong sense. Departures from the norm are understood as such, as

departures from the norm which is intrinsic to the kind of activity it is. One cannot, for example, explain the idea of a logical fallacy except against the background of an understanding of logical inference.

When this approach is applied to the philosophy of perceptual experience, it takes the form of what has come to be known as disjunctivism. An experience is essentially an attempt to perceive how things are. We understand cases of illusions, and other ways of failing to perceptually grasp how things are, as departures from the norm that is intrinsic to the kind of thing experience is. It can only be called an *illusion* against such a background (there are no illusions within dreams). Now we have to be careful about the kind of failure that an illusion is. It is not like saying something false, as seems to be implied by McDowell's account. One cannot grasp what it is for a thought to be true without grasping what it is for that thought to be false (one cannot grasp the thought *that the station is open* without grasping the thought *that the station is closed*), but illusions are not like that; they do not provide an internal contrast to the good case. They are more like saying something which is not even so much as true or false. As in the case of opaque thoughts (recall the example of the esoteric cat), certain experiences can become opaque, so that they themselves become the object of reflection. This happens when the way things look and the way they are departs from the patterns we are used to. Say that it looks to me as if people are ascending a rectangular staircase, but it also looks to me as if they keep returning to the same point, as in W.C. Escher's drawing. It both looks to me as if they are ascending, and it looks to me as if they are not ascending. Reality cannot be like that, and so I am led to reflect on the experience itself. I can, as it were, hold the content of my experience at

arm's length, and ask myself which appearance I should accept. Against a background of seeing how things are (and my other knowledge and worldview), and only against such a background, it may be possible for me to make the decision. This is assured by the fact that things normally are the way they look. The predictable patterns of our lives allow for the normal case to be a spontaneous grasping of how things are (it is a happy monotony that allows us to be at home in the world).

All this, it seems to me, is very much in concord with McDowell's philosophical outlook. But in *Mind and World* he is held back by a Fregean heritage, as a result of which he only imperfectly follows this approach. The structure of the bad case, in which one assesses whether an appearance should be taken at face value or rejected as an illusion, is projected onto the good case. That is just a consequence of the force/content distinction. Given the conception of a thought as forceless, the closest that one could come to 'taking up the standpoint of a thought' is taking up the standpoint of merely entertaining a thought; transposed to experience, this is the moment of being presented with an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so, without yet, as far as thus being presented to goes, taking it that things are that way. But this cannot be the normal case. We would not have enough to go on to make a decision whether to take an appearance at face value if the need to make a decision was not, as in reality it happily is, an exceptional circumstance. The situation in which that would be the normal case is one where we would find ourselves in surroundings so alien that nothing provides an anchor for us to orient ourselves; surroundings which would not be structured according to the fundamental

categories of our thinking. But if McDowell is right that experience is conceptually structured, then it follows that in such surroundings, our capacity for perception would not be that. More generally, it is to be expected that if our cognitive capacities belong to our natural history, as per Wittgenstein's idea, they are only capacities in our *habitat*.

Rejecting the structure of being presented with an appearance (thinkable content), and accepting or rejecting it in response (attaching a force), we can regain a truistic understanding of the reminder on experience. In order to accommodate McDowell's idea that it can literally be *seen* that things are thus and so, we do not have to construe *that things are thus and so* as an object of awareness; we can construe it as a specification of how one sees the object of awareness to be, and so also as a specification of how it is. I can say generically that I see where the sparrow is, but I can also say more specifically that I see that it is on the table. Just as the sparrow is not divorced from how it is, say, its being on the table, so its presence to me is not divorced from my seeing how it is, including where it is: on the table. For the sparrow to be present to me *is* for me to see how it is. Although occasionally I can reject an aspect of my experience as an illusion, there is normally no distance between the presence of things to me and my seeing how they are (which is not to deny, of course, that something can be present to me without my seeing how it is in *some* respects).

Now the problems that arose before dissolve. (1) The naïve objection was the expression of a misguided way of looking for facts, first thinking of them as things on a par with the sort of thing we find around us (the result of parsing 'seeing that things are thus and so' as seeing what 'that things are thus and so' refers to), and then finding that they are

not among the things around us. But facts are not things on a par with the sort of things we find around us. Instead, we can think of facts as aspects, specifications, determinations, of how things are; in the case of perceptually manifest facts, the way the sort of things which we find around us manifestly are. If I see where the sparrow is (on the table), I thereby take in a fact: the fact that the sparrow is on the table. And *seeing where things are* is certainly a familiar phenomenon.

(2) On my preferred alternative, the problem of false thought doesn't arise. The only conception of falsehood that the identity theory has room for is negative: "a thinkable is false if and only if it is not a fact." (Hornsby 1999: 243) This in effect means that internal negation, a negation of a predicate within a thought, has to be reduced to external negation, a negation of the whole thought. For it to be false *that the station is open*, according to the identity theory, is the same as for it to be not the case, not a fact, that the station is open. Hornsby fails to say more because she fails to use the thought to say when it would be false. She, like McDowell, treats a thought as a simple unity (*that things are thus and so* can be replaced by *that p*), and relates it as a whole to reality. It was just this that made for the problem about the being of false thoughts. It may seem that on my alternative, that problem would return in the form of the problem of non-being. If truth lies in being so, one might think falsehood lies in not being so, and this should trigger a deep puzzlement about absolute non-being. But if we stop looking at a thought, instead taking up the standpoint it constitutes, we can define falsehood as being *not* so: for it to be false that the station is open is for it to be *not* open; that is, closed. (This cannot be said if we use *that p*, instead of schematically spelling out the thought so that we have its

structure at our disposal.) This gives a positive understanding of falsehood. Instead of contrasting a thought with the whole of logical space, it is contrasted with a local alternative. There is nothing intrinsically puzzling about such local non-being. The station's being closed is just as much a case of a station's being some way as the station's being open (not that they are symmetric: one understands the station's being closed as a deprivation). Such facts as the station's being closed and my shoe-laces' being untied are negative facts which are nonetheless "in the world": there is not some positive fact which makes them true.[78] Things are different for such facts as the sky's being not red. There is, in a sense, no "the sky's being not red" in the world: what is in the world is the sky's being blue, and it is because of this that one can say truly that the sky is not red. But either way, there is not yet a puzzle about how it is possible for one to think something that is not the case. The puzzle is avoided by not equating a proposition with what is there when it is true.

(3) Unlike a Fregean thought, *being so* does make up the causal, changeable world. The sparrow's being on the table is locked in time: it begins when the sparrow lands on the table, and ends when it flies away. In thinking, one gains some independence from the flux, since one can think that the sparrow is on the table even when it is not (currently), and even when the sparrow or the table is not yet, or no longer, in existence. If the sparrow is now on the table, it always was and always will be true to think that it now is. (The independence is limited: there

78 This theme is explored in depth in the work of Jean-Philippe Narboux (e.g., Narboux 2009, 2011), to whom I am indebted for seeing the importance of refusing to reduce internal negation to external negation.

would have been no such thought if evolution had failed to create sparrows, or if this particular one had never come into being.) But this atemporality of truth does not make the sparrow's being on the table timeless. That is one way in which it is helpful to endorse a kind of minimal dualism: it allows for making sense of the way in which reason affords a certain independence from what is changeable. As thinking animals, we are not locked in time the way other animals are. We can allow for this independence by distinguishing, as the identity theory of truth does not, between *what* is true or false - an act of judgement, or its content, a proposition -, and what its truth or falsity lies in: some thing's being some way.

My alternative avoids the problems with Fregean monism by distinguishing between a claim and a circumstance. But neither are thinkaboutables; they are, in that sense, not things which in judgement we relate to each other. In Tractarian terms, they are facts, not objects. To say that the relation between them is *internal* is to say that it is not a relation. This comes to expression in the formula: it is true (false) to say that the man is pale because the man is, in fact, (not) pale. Because this conception is not relational, the regress problems which dualism faces are also avoided. To think a thought is not to think that the thought stands in some relation to reality. It is to think the unity of its constituents, and thereby the unity of what its constituents speak of. Truth is a kind of unity of thinking and being, but this not a sameness of thinkable and fact. It is rather the unity of the proposition which is expressed in the verb or copula, and in which assertoric force comes to expression in a judgement or assertion. Not “One can think, for instance, that spring has begun, and that very same thing, that spring

has begun, can be the case," but, "One can think that spring has begun, and the very thing one then thinks of, spring, can be the very way one thinks it is, having begun."

I wrote before that monism can be characterised in this way: what our words make manifest, the conceptual forms we express, we can also grasp in our experience, and thus find enmattered in the world around us. It is important that this is only normally so, and we can get a grasp on what it means for this to be normally so by looking at departures from the norm. Words poorly chosen may fail, on an occasion, to make the intended thought manifest; a thought may fail to be either true or false; and an experience in unfamiliar surroundings may become incoherent. In such cases our representations become themselves the object of reflection, obtruding themselves between us and a transparent viewpoint on the world. Such departures from the norm are in many ways more interesting (as the work of Travis attests), and certainly more varied, than the norm itself. There is very little to say about the norm—hence the emphasis on truisms. But we understand failures of transparency as such, as failing to live up to a standard that is internal to the sort of thing it is. This allows me to almost agree with McDowell's core idea, "Our thinking can be distanced from the world by being false, but there is no distance implicit in the very idea of thought." Our representations can be distanced from the world by being false or opaque (e.g., inapt), but there is no distance implicit in the very idea of representation.

Conclusions

McDowell affirms two truisms which, in themselves, really are truistic, and which are nonetheless helpful in order to discourage dualism: (1) We can think that things are a certain way, and when we think truly, things are in fact that way. (2) In experience it can be manifest that things are a certain way.

But McDowell develops these reminders within a Fregean framework. This comes to expression in two ways. (1') The use of 'that things are thus and so' as a referring expression, so that the first reminder becomes: the very same thing that one can think can also be the case. (2') The two-part structure of experience, so that the second reminder becomes: in experience one is presented with an appearance to the effect that things are thus and so, which, in response, one can either accept at face value or reject as an illusion.

But understood like that, the reminders cease to be truistic. In fact they are highly problematic. (1') Although McDowell calls “that things are thus and so” a thinkable, in presenting his view he refers to it, and so treats it as a thinkaboutable. But if a thinkable is a thing, it is the wrong sort of thing to make a world out of. (2') We do not normally hold appearances at arm's length and decide whether to accept them or not. That McDowell knows, but the problem goes deeper: this could not even be the normal case. The logical structure McDowell posits could never be the surface structure.

We can regain the truistic form of the reminders when we reject the Fregean framework (as is done in more detail in chapter II). They then become (1'') I can think of something that it is some way, and when I

think truly, the very thing I think of is the very way I think it is. (2'') To see things is to see that things are thus and so. But to see that things are thus and so is not to be presented with a thinkable content, but to see of something that it is some way. (E.g., to see a bird, and in doing so, to see where it is: on the table.)

This amounts to a kind of minimal dualism: claim and circumstance are distinguished, but they are not different thinkaboutables which in thinking we relate to each other. A claim is true because a circumstance obtains, but when we spell this out, the sense of a relation dissolves: it is true (false) to think that spring has begun because spring has, in fact, (not) begun.

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